



Ohr Yerushalayim News

3rd October 2024 - Volume 17 - Issue 11 - יום כפור תשפ"ד

News This Week

A Message From The Rov & Rebbetzen

The Rov and Rebbetzen wish all members of the Kehillah a healthy year followed with Nachas and Simchos, a healthy year followed with Nachas and Simchos.

עירוב תבשילין

A reminder to make an עירוב תבשילין before Yom Tov.

תקיעת שופר

As in previous years there will be a second Shofar Blowing following davening on both days of Rosh Hashono at approximately 1.20pm.

Children Activities

There will be space in the hall for young children, accompanied by a responsible adult, to relax on the second day of Rosh Hashono after the first Shofar blowing (approx 11:15) until the end of Shul (approx 1:30). There will be books and limited amount of toys, so parents are asked to bring their own toys for their kids to play with.

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Dean and Susan Kaye on the birth of a granddaughter to Avrohom and Chana Sinclair in Israel

שבת שובה דרשה

The Rov will be giving a שבת שובה דרשה following שחרית and R' Shaya will give a שבת שובה דרשה following מנחה.

Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to the following who have Yahrtzeit this week:

1st day Rosh Hashono - Yoel Smus for his mother

Weds, 7th Tishrei - Yosef Yitzchok Chalomish for his father, Jodie Pereira for her father

Thurs 8th Tishrei - Zev Ritvo for his mother, Tony Levinson for his mother

Newsletter

Thank you to those members who have started contributing to the newsletter on a regular basis. If you consider yourself a budding writer and would like to join the 'rota' please be in touch with Aaron Chaim David. It would be a small commitment of every 6 weeks - or less if we get inundated with volunteers ;) Any feedback or suggestions for the newsletter are welcome and should be given to Aaron Chaim 07814143978 or aaronchaimdavid@gmail.com

Thank You

A big thanks to the ladies who kindly gave of their time and effort to polish the Sifrei Torah silver.

A Final Note For The Year

The editor would like to take this opportunity to wish the Kehilla and חתימה טובה and ask מחילה for any offence caused by, or for omissions from the newsletter during the past year.

Urgent Appeal From The Rov

תשובה תפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזרה

With the approach of the ימים נוראים I request from each and every member who is able to support my annual collection for funds to help those of our Kehilla who require a "top up" for י"ט expenses. All donations are gratefully accepted with a ברכה שנה טובה ומתוקה for a

Donations can be made in either of the following

1. Directly to myself (in Shul or at home) either cash, cheque or voucher payable to ZY Gemach (charity no. 1153306)
2. By bank transfer to
A/c Name : ZY Gemach
Sort Code: 77-19-09
A/c No. 2935 0768
Reference: RHC 85.

Thank you in advance for your generous response to this Mitzva.

Etiquette

Dr Michael Wilks

The "British School of Excellence" offers a variety of etiquette courses, teaching individuals how to conduct themselves in different social situations. Their course on social etiquette emphasizes that understanding these rules can have several positive effects: it boosts confidence, enhances personal image, and enriches relationships with others. When we feel at ease during social interactions, we can focus on building meaningful connections rather than worrying about potential missteps.

However, etiquette isn't limited to secular contexts. In places of worship, such as synagogues (shuls), there are specific rules that express the holiness of the space, the significance of the Torah, and, above all, our connection to Hashem. I've observed instances where these protocols were not followed, so allow me to share some of them, particularly those related to receiving an Aliyah or an honour.

British Judges are given the title "His Honour" abbreviated to HH. A certain shul wanted to give an aliyah to HH Judge Owen z"l. The Shammes went over to him and said, "The Gabboim are honoured to offer his honour an honour."

1. Aliyah Protocol:

- When someone is called up to the Torah (an Oleh), they should wear a Tallis. This attire symbolizes reverence for the Torah.
- The Oleh should take the shortest route to the Bimah to signify eagerness to approach the Torah. Conversely, when returning to their seat, they should take the longest route, expressing reluctance to leave the Torah.
- If both routes are of equal distance, the oleh ascends to the right

and descends by the other route.

2. Holding the Sefer Torah:

- During their Aliyah, the Oleh should hold the Sefer Torah by the poles (Etz Chayim). This demonstrates respect for the sacred text.
- Ideally, the Oleh stands without leaning on anything. However, if they are weak, a slight lean is permissible.

3. Hagbah and Gelilah:

- After the Torah reading, when performing Hagbah (lifting the Torah) and Gelilah (rolling it closed), it is a mitzvah on the Magbiah and the Gollel to accompany the Sefer Torah back to the Ark.

Observing these etiquette guidelines not only honours tradition but also helps us forge deeper connections with Hashem. May our actions reflect reverence and mindfulness as we engage in sacred rituals.

Rosh HaShana

Richard Danziger

I would like to relate an idea I heard from Harav Zev Leff when I was in yeshiva. The Gemara in Rosh Hashanah describes the judgement of these lofty days:

On Rosh Hashanah all creatures pass before Him like "Benei Maron". What is the meaning of Benei Maron? Here [in Bavel] they interpreted it to mean: Like a flock of sheep. Raish Lakish said: Like the ascent of Beit Maron. Rav Yehuda said in the name of Shmuel: Like the soldiers of the house of King David. Rabba bar bar Chana said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: And they are all scanned in a single scan.

These various descriptions are seemingly redundant. The description of sheep and soldiers seem to be the same, and the scenario of Raish Lakish, of the ascent of Beit Maron, doesn't at first hand appear to be a form of judgement at all.

Rav Leff explains that each example of "Benei Maron" can be explained uniquely. The first – the flock of sheep – is like how a farmer counts his flock. He may not be particularly concerned with quality, size and so on, all he wants to know is how many sheep are present. Are any missing or unaccounted for? Have any wandered off or been taken by predators? How many have been born this season, and so on. So too with HaShem in this understanding of "Benei Maron" – HaShem counts his "flock", i.e. the Bnei Yisroel, in simple terms. Are we here on Rosh Hashanah? Are we presented and accounted for, or have we wandered far from the rest of the flock?

The second interpretation – like the ascent of Beit Maron, is a more individual judgement. One explanation of Beit Maron it that it was a mountainous path that was only wide enough for a single person to traverse. The judgement of "Beit Maron" is to judge where each Yid is on their personal "ascents". Have we climbed the mountain, and improved in ourselves and our Yiddishkeit? Or we have we slipped downwards and backwards?

The third interpretation – like the soldiers of house of King David, relates to our judgement in the perspective of community. An individual soldier isn't really capable of achieving much and a soldier who acts on his own judgement is potentially destructive. The true strength of a soldier comes from the combination of his capabilities with his squad, his platoon and the other arms of the service. So too how HaShem looks at each of us. Are we involved with our families and our communities? Do we daven in a minyan and learn in a chabura – or do we isolate ourselves?

And finally the opinion of Rabbar bar bar Chana in the name of Rabbi Yochanan expresses an aspect of our awe of HaShem – how all judgements of all creations that have ever existed, are completed in their entirety in a single instant.

Wishing everyone a Gmar Chesima Tova.

The Main Theme Of The Day

Rabbi J Rubinstein

A good introduction to Rosh Hashonoh, is the story of the factory owner who was very dissatisfied with his workers. They always came late, and took long breaks during the day, and generally did not do their jobs well. One day he called them together and informed them he was terminating their employment, and closing the factory. However, he intended to reopen the factory the next day, and he was prepared to reemploy them, if they would sign a new document stating they were undertaking to follow strictly the rules of their new employment. Otherwise he was not going to employ them again.

This could serve as an analogy for what happens on Rosh Hashonoh.

Rosh Hashonoh is the anniversary of the day Hashem created the first human being, and granted him life in this world. Each year on that date he reviews the behaviour of each human being and decides whether He wishes to bestow on him another year of life. Rabbi Chaim Friedlander says we can understand it through the story of Pharaoh who on the day of his birthday restored the butler to his old job and hung the baker. We can appreciate why he forgave the butler as part of the celebrations of his birthday, but why did he hang the baker on that particular day? The explanation is, it was not just a celebration, it was the day he reevaluated the behaviour of his officials, and decided anew, what to do with them in the coming year.

On Rosh Hashonoh, we must recognise Hashem's sovereignty over the world, and implicitly undertake to do everything we can, to fulfil His instructions. The very fact that we acknowledge he is the king, and we want the whole world to accept Him as king, is in itself the fulfilment of His wishes and a reason for Him to grant us another year of life. We should never take life for granted and think it happens by itself. Each year there is another evaluation by Hashem of our lives.

This is why we emphasise so much the word המלך – "The king", during our prayers on Rosh Hashonoh, and that so much of the Musaf Shemoneh Esrei concentrates on acknowledging that Hashem is the king of the world.

(Based on Sefer Sifsei Chaim Vol. 1 Page 115-122. A fuller explanation is to be found there)

I read a beautiful story about Rav Yaakov Edelstein. Apparently he used to love singing the well known melody for the words, אָנא עבדא דקדוּשאַ, אָנא עבדא דקדוּשאַ בריך הוא – "I am the servant of the Holy One blessed be He"; except that he changed it from the way most people sing it. The melody usually fits the words, by repeating the word אָנא – "I". He fitted it in saying the Hebrew word for I only once, and instead repeated the Hebrew word for servant. So it came out אָנא עבדא, עבדא דקדוּשאַ בריך הוא – "I am the servant the servant, the servant of the Holy One blessed be He" It is a pleasant way of making the same point. The main theme of our thoughts and prayers on the days of Rosh Hashonoh should be to accept Hashem as our king, but we must mean it with all our hearts. Then we can hope that Hashem will grant us a new lease of life for the coming year.

Poor Beginning, Wealthy End

Rabbi Yisroel Ciner (Torah.org)

An interesting thing occurred this morning. I woke up with my day pretty much planned and set. I had already decided what I would later write for my parsha and I had my morning shiur all photocopied and ready to go. As I said, everything was all set... until I sat down with my guys, distributed the photocopies and realized that I had copied the wrong page.

Feeling a bit hot under the collar, I told them about a certain Rav who was a world-renowned public speaker. His Rabbeim had told him that when a certain thought, story or parable would fall into his mind while speaking; he should share it with the audience. The heavens had decided that someone there must have to hear that thought.

With that introduction I told them that Hashem must have wanted us to learn the page that I had mistakenly copied and we began. Ultimately, it wasn't only my morning shiur that got revamped, as I decided to build my parsha on the Gemara that I learned today and the thoughts that came out in the conversation.

The Talmud [Rosh Hashana 16B] teaches in the name of Rav Yitzchak: Every year that is poor at its beginning becomes wealthy in the end.

The Tosafos explain this quite literally. When the Jews are poor, their hearts are broken. This arouses Hashem's mercy that manifests itself in the wealth that the year will ultimately bring.

Rashi offers a different explanation. He explains that when Yisroel make themselves as if they are poor on Rosh Hashanah and they plead as they pray, Hashem accepts their prayers and sends them a bountiful year.

We discussed how Rosh Hashanah is the time when we coronet Hashem as the King of the world. The focus of the prayers is not on our own personal needs but on the hope that the world will recognize Hashem and appreciate all that He does.

With that we had a better understanding of this poorness that Rav Yitzchak was discussing. It is the recognition that all that we have and all that we own are not really the direct results of our own achievements.

We can make the effort and attempts but the degree of our success is solely in Hashem's hands. As such, we are really quite poor.

Hashem hopes to encourage us to build a relationship with Him through that which He gives to us. If a person thinks he's doing it all on his own with the strength of his own hands, then the way for Hashem to deliver a wake-up call to such a person is by withholding His bracha. On the other hand, if we recognize just how poor we really are and that all that comes our way is a gift from Hashem, then any bracha will reinforce and strengthen our connection to Him. By doing so we open up the spigots of bracha allowing that year which started out so 'poor' to end up so bountiful.

My wife and I felt that we had experienced this in a very first-hand sort of way. As of a few weeks before Rosh Hashanah last year, we had been blessed with six wonderful children. All of the pregnancies had gone smoothly and the children were all born full-term and healthy. We began to expect that as almost a given and perhaps had become a bit complacent in regard to the myriad miracles which contribute to a healthy child.

We were woken from our dream when my wife miscarried late in her pregnancy, just a few weeks before Rosh Hashanah last year. We went into that Rosh Hashanah feeling empty and humbled. We felt Hashem's reign over the world vis-à-vis our own ineptitude and helplessness. That Rosh Hashanah was as poor as it gets.

"Every year that is poor at its beginning becomes wealthy in the end." Amazingly, we merited experiencing the fulfillment of the second half of Rav Yitzchak's words. The feeling of poverty, the recognition of where all 'riches' emanate from, opens up the pipeline for incredible bracha to come flowing through. Exactly ten days before Rosh Hashanah this year, we were blessed with the most precious wealth imaginable as my wife delivered a beautiful, healthy baby girl.

"Every year that is poor at its beginning becomes wealthy in the end." A k'siva v'chasima tova. May you be blessed with a healthy and happy year of growth and productivity, recognizing and accepting the dominion of the King of kings in this world.

The Connection Between Peah and Malchiyos

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

I would like to share two insights I saw from the Tolner Rebbe. They both speak to the same point.

Parshas Emor is one of several parshios that discuss the Moados (Jewish Holidays). The Torah begins there with the Yom Tov of Pesach and then continues with Shavuos, etc., etc. However, in the middle of the Moados (between Shavuos and Rosh Hashanah), the pasuk says "When you reap the harvest of the land, you shall not remove completely the corners of your field as you reap and you shall not gather the gleanings of your harvest; for the poor and the convert you shall leave them, I am Hashem your G-d." (Vayikra 23:22) In what appears to be an unrelated interruption to the listing of the Jewish Holidays in the calendar cycle, the Torah discusses themitzvah of Peah.

Then the Torah resumes its discussion of the Moados: "...In the seventh month on the first of the month, there shall be a rest day for you, a remembrance with shofar blasts..." (Vayikra 23:24). Immediately after the parsha of Peah, the Torah continues with the Yom Tov of Rosh Hashanah.

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 32a) asks "How do we know to recite Malchiyos (the section in the Rosh Hashanah Musaf prayer describing G-d's Attribute of Monarchy)? In a Braisa it was taught: Rabbi says "Ani Hashem Elokeichem" ('I am Hashem your G-d' – the last 3 words of Vayikra 23:22 dealing with Peah) are juxtaposed with "And on the seventh month..." (the first two words of Vayikra 23:24 dealing with Rosh Hashanah)." This teaches the obligation to say Malchiyos.

This quite obscure allusion seems to be a very roundabout way to teach the obligation to say Malchiyos in the Rosh Hashanah Musaf prayer. It certainly seems like a stretch to use this as THE source for invoking the overriding theme of the day when Hashem sits in Judgment as King over the entire world.

Another observation: The Toras Kohanim (cited by Rashi on Vayikra 23:22) asks the question we raised above: "Why did the Torah place thismitzvah (Peah) in the middle of the holidays, with Pesach and Shavuos on one side, and Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos on the other side?" The Toras Kohanim answers that whoever gives Peah

properly is considered as if he built theBeis HaMikdash and brought his offerings inside it.

There are many significant mitzvo among the 613 mitzvos. Chazal do not teach "whoever puts on Tefillin – it is as if he built theBeis HaMikdash." Such a statement is not made about eating matza on Pesach, or about reciting Krias Shma. Somehow, suddenly, leaving a corner of the field for the poor is equated with offering sacrifices in theBeis HaMikdash! What is so special about Peah?

The answer to both of these questions is that Peah is fundamentally different from any other type of Tzedakah. When I give charity, I have the sense and feeling "I am giving this man money. I am taking my hard-earned money and I am giving it to him." There are many psychological and emotional ramifications attached to that. First of all, it is a bit of an ego trip. I have a certain satisfaction from fulfilling amitzvah. There is a certain feeling of superiority gained by dispensing charity. I feel somehow higher than this poor individual, this unfortunate schlepper. "I can take care of him." That gives me a good feeling.

There are many wonderful forms of dispensing charity, but all of them come with this sense of ego gratification. Even when a person gives matanos b'seser (literally 'gifts in secret' where the donor is unaware of the recipient and the recipient is unaware of the donor), nevertheless there is this inner satisfaction that comes with such donations. This is all well and good, but the element of inner pride is present.

Peah is a different type of mitzvah. Peah is not "given," but rather, it is abandoned, so to speak. The Ribono shel Olam tells the farmer: "Guess what? Of your 150 acres, you only own 149 of them. That little corner at the end of your field is not yours! That belongs to the poor." In this case, there is no satisfaction of "I gave him" because "No. You didn't!" Themitzvah is not formulated as a gift from the farmer to the poor man, but rather as the poor owning this portion of the field. Someone who neglects to give other types of gifts to the poor is guilty of "stealing the gifts of the poor." However, one who fails to leave the corner of the field is not "stealing from the poor;" he is just plain "stealing" period!

The corner of your field belongs to the poor because the Ribono shel Olam said "This is My world and you can own your 149 acres, but this part you don't own." In truth, the Ribono shel Olam owns the entire field, but in order to bring that point home, He commands: "You cannot touch that corner!"

This message is conveyed by the last three words of this pasuk dealing with Peah – namely "Ani Hashem Elokeichem." Hashem is saying "I am the property owner."

Malchiyos is a difficult concept for us to imagine in our day and age. We don't know what a king is. Even in England, where they still have a monarchy, the king is not a real king. In basic terminology to which we can relate today, malchus very simply means: Hashem runs the world. It is His world. This is the appropriate thought process for the Yomim Noraim.

I recently heard a speech from Rav Avrom Ausband, the Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshiva of Telshe Almuni in Riverdale New York. He told the following story: When he first started the Yeshiva, – like any other yeshiva – he struggled financially. Making payroll was always a challenge. He used to pay his Rebbeim twice a month – on the first and fifteenth. Many times, he did not know how he would make payroll! He said he was blessed with a group of chaverim, people of means, and when payroll time arrived and he did not have enough money, he would call up one of these friends and say "Listen, can you lend me \$25,000?" They would do it. Rabbi Ausband was good for the money. Rav Ausband said there was one time that he had to make payroll and every one of his friends in this group of chaverim had a legitimate excuse why they could not help him at that time. He said he was at his wits end, unable to see a way to meet payroll! He could not concentrate on anything. "Tomorrow is the 15th of the month, and I just can't make it!" He said he was walking to the yeshiva at night for Maariv. He was standing there on the street in Riverdale, NY and he raised up his hands to shamayim and pleaded "Ribono shel Olam, it is not my yeshiva. It is Your yeshiva. I have done everything I can. I am out of eitzas (plans, solutions). Ribono shel Olam, either You are going to help me or I am just going to need to tell all the Rebbeim 'Sorry, I just can't pay you this month.'"

Then he proceeded to the yeshiva and for the first time in days, he had peace of mind: "Listen, I did what I can do; there is nothing more I can do. I want to sit down and learn after Maariv." (He said that at that point he had not learned well for several days.) As it turned out, a Jew came to Maariv, came over to Rav Ausband immediately after davening and said "Can I speak to you for a minute?" Rav Ausband said, "Okay. But it has to be right here in the Beis HaMedrash because I need to learn."

Rav Ausband did not know who the fellow was. The fellow took out an envelope and said, "Here is a check for \$20,000." Rav Ausband said that right then he gained a new level of recognition of the fact that 'It is Hashem's world!' A person might think "It is because of my connections. I know this person. I know that guy. No. At the end of the day, it is all the Ribono shel Olam."

This, my friends, is the lesson of Peah. That is why Peah is the source of "How do we know to say Malchiyos on Rosh Hashanah?" The mitzvah of Peah concludes with its message: 'Ani Hashem Elokeichem.'" Peah demonstrates that it is the Ribono shel Olam's world.

This is why it is Peah – and notmatzah, and not Shofar, and not Tefillin – that the Gemara equates with building theBeis HaMikdashand bringing Korbanos. Out of all the 248 positivemitzvos, Peah is a prototype for being mekabel ol malchus shamayim (accepting the yoke of heaven). Peah demonstrates an emunah in the Ribono shel Olam. When a person leaves the Peah in the field, he is putting his money where his mouth is, more than with any other form of Tzedakah.

In our day and age of democracy and egalitarianism and all the other philosophies that we encounter in our world, it is difficult to imagine and take to heart what a monarchy is all about. We should try to concentrate on the fact that the Ribono shel Olam runs the world including every little aspect of our lives. Every success in life that we experience comes from Him and every setback that we experience comes from Him. That is our kabbalas ol malchus shamayim (acceptance of the yoke of heaven). That is how we should enter Rosh Hashanah.

It is Your world, Ribono shel Olam. Please take care of me. Please take care of my family. Please take care of Klal Yisrael.

Kesiva V'Chasima Tova! May you be Inscribed and Sealed in the Book of Life!

Rosh Hashanah Coronation Of The Sovereign

Dr Michael Wilks

Rosh Hashanah is associated with the coronation of the King of kings, emphasizing Hashem's sovereignty and judgment. This is brought home to us many times in our prayers, especially when the Chazzan for Shacharis starts with the word "HaMelekh". I heard recently from a shiur of Rabbi Moshe Weinberger (of Congregation Aish Kodesh in Woodmere, New York) that we should not lose sight of the other aspect of our relationship with Hashem - that He is "Ovinu" our Father as well as "Malkeinu" our King.

The piyut, "לְקַל עוֹרֵךְ דִּין" (To the Almighty Who apportions judgment), seems to reinforce the Kingship theme of strict judgment. However, we will see that it also delves into the compassionate aspects of our connection with Hashem.

Let's explore some of the key points from the piyut:

- לְקַל עוֹרֵךְ דִּין Appportioning Judgment: The opening lines acknowledge Hashem's role as the One who judges. On Rosh Hashanah, we stand before Him, aware of our deeds and seeking His mercy.
- לְבוֹחַן לְבָבוֹת בְּיוֹם דִּין: לְגוּלָה עֲמוּקוֹת בְּדִין Examining Hearts and Revealing Depths:
- לְדוֹבֵר מִיִּשְׁרָיִם בְּיוֹם דִּין: לְהוֹנֵה דְעוֹת בְּדִין Who speaks uprightly on the day of judgment; Who utters knowledge in judgment;

These last two phrases evoke a sense of scrutiny and introspection. We might naturally think that Hashem acts in strict judgment, but my Machzor points out that the continuation of the Piyut shifts the focus toward Hashem's kindness and compassion. Thus we have a refreshing perspective. Rather than being overly critical, Hashem seeks the hidden merits within us. His examination aims to find the good in our hearts and deeds.

How does the Continuation of the Piyut shift the focus toward Hashem's kindness and compassion:

● לְיָתִיב וְעֵשָׂה חֶסֶד בְּיוֹם דִּין: לְזַכֵּר בְּרִיתוֹ בְּדִין Steadfast, kind and recalling His Covenant: This reminds us of the eternal bond between Hashem and His people.

● לְחַוֵּל מִעֲשָׂיו בְּיוֹם דִּין: לְטַהֵר חוּסָיו בְּדִין Pity and Purification: Hashem's compassion extends to purifying those who trust in Him.

● לְיָדוּעַ מִחֻשְׁבוֹת בְּיוֹם דִּין: לְכַבֵּשׁ כַּעֲסוֹ בְּדִין Knowing Thoughts and Suppressing Anger: He understands our innermost thoughts and tempers His anger.

● לְלִבֵּשׁ צְדָקוֹת בְּיוֹם דִּין: לְמוֹחַל עֲוֹנוֹת בְּדִין Clothed in Righteousness and Forgiving Iniquities: Hashem's righteousness leads Him to forgive our transgressions.

● לְנוֹרָא תְהִלּוֹת בְּיוֹם דִּין: לְסוּלַח לְעֲמוּסָיו בְּדִין Awesome in Praise and Pardoning: His greatness is matched by His willingness to pardon.

● לְעוֹנָה לְקוֹרְאָיו בּוֹם דִּין: לְפִוְעַל רַחֲמָיו בְּדִין Answering Those Who Call Upon Him and exercises compassion:

● לְצוּפָה נִסְתָּרוֹת בְּיוֹם דִּין: לְקוֹנֵה עֲבָדָיו בְּדִין Scrutinizing Secrets and acquires His servants; saving them from their accusers.

● לְרַחֵם עַמּוֹ בְּיוֹם דִּין: לְשׁוֹמֵר אֱהָבָיו בְּדִין Compassion on His People and Preservation of Love:

● לְתוֹמָךְ תְּמִימָיו בְּיוֹם דִּין Supporting His Perfect Ones: Hashem sustains those who serve Him with simple faith.

Revealing Hashem's Kindness: The piyut ultimately emphasizes Hashem's loving nature. His examination isn't about fault-finding but about uncovering the good within us. As a father loves his children, Hashem seeks our well-being.

So, as we approach Rosh Hashanah, let's remember both aspects: the awe of crowning the King and the comfort of being embraced by our loving Father. May our thoughts, words, and deeds reflect the goodness He seeks within us.

Days of Aarrghhhhhh!

Rabbi A. J. Jacobs (Torah.org)

"Wow! Almost Rosh HaShanah already? Where does the time go?" (Shudder)

Sound familiar? It's a thought that you, along with Jews all over the world, may have noticed has already crept its way into your conscience. And if it hasn't yet made its appearance – it's there, lurking just below the surface waiting for the opportune time to rear its ugly head. And eventually, no matter how long you try to ignore it and suppress it, the realization that the New Year is almost upon us will emerge. Your muscles will tense ever so slightly, your heart will start to beat a little faster and you may notice small beads of sweat forming on your forehead – but do not be alarmed – these are all normal reactions. After all, it is almost Rosh Hashanah.

But why should the thought of the approaching holiday cause us such discomfort, anxiety, or even downright fear? Is it simply because it brings to us the realization that time moves by so quickly that it could spin your head? We don't take notice on a day-to-day basis of the speed with which the time whirs by, but when yearly milestones come around it somehow seems that it is just not possible that a full year has gone by...in such a short time. Perhaps this is partially to blame. But that can't be it. If this were the only explanation then it would stand to reason that every Jewish holiday would elicit the same response – and in my experience the realization that "it's almost Shavuot" doesn't quite do the trick.

To understand this phenomenon we need to explore the meaning of Rosh Hashanah, its purpose and context. Perhaps then we can begin to discuss how to approach the anxiety that it causes.

Rosh Hashanah is referred to by the Sages as Yom HaDin – the Day of Judgment. We are told that on this day (not coincidentally the anniversary of the creation of man) the Heavenly Creator reviews the progress of each and every individual over the past year. The Sages compare us to sheep passing before their shepherd one by one in a single-file line. The message is that there is nothing to hide behind and no one else to blame – we stand on our personal merits alone. The Almighty scrutinizes our deeds, analyzes our thoughts, and reviews our level of commitment to serve Him. Then, the gravest moment of all, He turns to the two large tomes set before Him – one the book of Life, and the other the book of Death – and inscribes our names in one...or the other. On this Yom Hadin our King decrees the events of the entire following year. Everything is decided on this day – our ability

to earn a living, our health, our children's success at finding a mate – even how many times we will stub a toe – no detail is overlooked.

Indeed, Rosh Hashanah is a serious, even scary day. No wonder why the thought of its approach sends shivers down our spines. But now let's move forward and a look at the events that follow the Day of Judgment – The Days of Repentance and Yom Kippur – and we will find something very peculiar.

Teshuva, repentance, is, quite literally, the process of returning to God. Every time we err and do something that is not in line with what the Creator wants of us, a distance is created and barriers are placed between us and Him. With teshuva we break down those barriers, and draw close once again. The Sages tell us that, although teshuva is acceptable at any time, there is one time of the year that is set aside specifically for teshuva, a time when God looks to us to accept our teshuva and assists us in the process. This time is the ten days of the year that begin with Rosh Hashanah and culminate with Yom Kippur. Ideally, we are meant to spend the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur involved in deep introspection. Now it is our turn to scrutinize our deeds, review our thoughts, and consider our level of commitment to serving our Creator. We recall our mistakes and shortcomings, regret them bitterly, and resolve to set a course for a path of self-improvement. On Yom Kippur we intensify this process through the service of the day and by denying ourselves the basic comforts of normal life. By the time the shofar sounds at the end of the day, we are secure in the knowledge that the filth and stain of our misdeeds have been washed away, and we are instructed, say the Sages, by a Bas Kol, a heavenly voice, "Go and eat your bread in happiness." After all of the stress, anxiety, and hard work, we are rewarded with...well, a beautiful ending.

But if we take a step back and look at the entire chronology something seems wrong. Rosh Hashana, Days of Repentance, Yom Kippur. First comes the Judgment, then teshuva, then forgiveness. We come to Rosh Hashanah with an entire year's worth of baggage, and only afterwards do we attempt to do anything about it. Wouldn't it make more sense to first do teshuva and be forgiven and then come to judgment? Wouldn't it be more beneficial to break down the barriers, wash away the stains and clean our slate before Rosh Hashanah? Wouldn't it be nice to go into the Day of Judgment knowing that everything has already been taken care of? It certainly would alleviate some of the pre-Rosh Hashanah stress! So why this seemingly cruel reversal of order?

The answer, of course, is that, to the contrary, this reversal of order is a tremendous favor that Hashem does for us. Our Creator knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows that as time goes on and, day by day, we go through the motions of life, we tend to forget what's really important. We don't always have the time or clarity of mind to focus on our relationship with God. And eventually we get used to neglecting our duty to constantly grow closer to Him. It reaches the point that we become so jaded in our lack of spiritual growth that we are like sleepwalkers – physically awake but spiritually asleep. Our Creator knows that if, while in this state, we were given a special opportunity to break down the barriers that keep us from Him, we may very well not even notice. In our stupor we would be liable to let the opportunity slip right by.

So we need a wake-up call. Something powerful enough to shake us out of our slumber. Something scary enough to sober us up, and fast. Enter Rosh Hashanah. The awesome nature of the day forces us to examine our relationship with Hashem. We must face the fact that there are so many barriers to break down and so much filth to wash away. The shofar, like an alarm clock, screams to us, "Wake up!! Things cannot continue this way! There is so much work to be done!" Only after this reminder can we hope to take advantage of the opportunity given us and begin, in earnest, the work ahead. Only once we have been shocked into facing reality do we stand a chance to begin the process of returning to Hashem and gaining forgiveness on Yom Kippur. And although the decree of Judgment is written on Rosh Hashanah, it is not sealed until Yom Kippur.

So as you anticipate the coming of the New Year, you may feel a bit anxious. Your muscles may tense ever so slightly, your heart may start to beat a little faster and you may notice small beads of sweat forming on your forehead – but do not be alarmed – these are all normal

reactions. After all, it is almost Rosh Hashanah.

The Din-Rachamim Tango of the Yamim Noraim

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

When I call out the name of Hashem, render greatness to our G-d "Seek Hashem when He can be found; call Him when He is near." Chazal locate this "when" in the Ten Days of Teshuvah. What indication did they have that this is what the verse means?

"These are the products of heaven and earth ברהבאמ/when they were created." The heh in behebaram is written in a small format. The point, say Chazal, is that Hashem created the world with the letter heh. Now, when Chazal speak about Creation, they mean the emergence of Man, who is the purpose of Creation. This is clear from their insistence that Rosh Hashanah marks the anniversary of the creation of the world, even though it was Man who was created on that day. The rest of the days of Creation preceded his arrival; they are not part of the celebration.

Let's take a closer look at the letter heh. Two components comprise it. At the top and right are a dalet; the lower left shows a vav. The dalet is related to the word dalah, which means the impoverishment of being dependent on something outside of itself. In our case, it signifies a feminine aspect, receiving from the vav that it dances around. That vav is a male aspect. It looks like a straight line, and signifies connection of one point and another – specifically the drawing down of a Divine influence from above.

The dalet is din; the vav is chesed. In the creation process, din surrounds chesed. In a world deliberately left incomplete, din functions to arouse chesed, and move it to react.

We have only begun. Bereishis, so to speak, was only the beginning of creation! Looking back at the events of Creation, the Torah writes that Hashem desisted from all the work, "which G-d created to make." Those last words convey that there was still much to do. Much more would have to be done after the six days of Creation to get to the final building of a complete world.

As the pinnacle of creation, it is the task of Man – the being who bears the greatest imprint upon the world of the Divine powers of Creation – to advance the project. It is Man who bears the heh of the beginning of the project. This is what Chazal mean when they say that Man was created *du partzufim*/two images, male and female, conjoined. *Du*, of course, is spelled dalet vav!

On Rosh Hashanah, as we know, Hashem revisits Creation. He looks at what Man has done to either help or hinder the continuing upbuilding of the world. If Man has made a positive contribution, the world continues its existence. It is effectively re-created. If Man has thwarted Hashem's goals, the world is returned to the *tohu vavohu* of primordial existence.

Because chesed is closest to Hashem's essence, He gives us the Yamim Noraim. Rosh Hashanah – the Day of Judgment/din – strikes fear in us, moving us to do teshuvah. We in turn then use the shofar to invoke Divine rachamim, and draw it down upon us. The process, therefore, is the dalet of din moving the internal vav to invoke Divine compassion through the cry of the shofar, and link it to us. This is, in effect, a reversal. Previously, din served to bring chesed to light. Now, it is chesed that can permeate and change din. The vav now stands in front of the dalet.

This goes on for ten days, each day bringing more chesed. (The number ten is almost intuitive. It is the sum of the gematrios of dalet and vav!) They culminate in Yom Kippur. Chesed no longer needs any nudge from din. It has broken away from din, and is free to stand fully on its own. The day shows aspects of *olam habo* – in which there is no eating or drinking. While in our world, different *midos* of Hashem are displayed, the teshuvah of the season brings us back to a more profound place, one which preceded the *midos*. In it, there is only Hashem's chesed.

Klal Yisrael is the *Merkavah* of Hashem's Name. Our *aveiros* blemish it, create imperfection in it. He chooses to remain in it. When we return in teshuvah, we restore its wholeness. We are therefore told in our *pasuk* to call out His Name in its full significance. We do that through our teshuvah, therefore becoming a better *Merkavah*/vehicle for His Being. But our intentions should not be limited to our personal journey and needs. We should do it completely for the purpose of glorifying

Him. We are the only ones who can add power, as it were, to His Name, revealing its fullness.

Elul – It's All Relative

Rabbi Elyahu Hoffmann (Torah.org)

Do not see the ox or the sheep of your brother wandering – and avoid them – rather you must surely return them to your brother. And if your brother is not close by to you, or you don't know him, you shall gather it into your house, and it shall remain with you until your brother comes to claim it – then you shall return it to him. (22:1-2)

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 30a) notes the strange wording of the first verse above, "Do not see... and avoid..." The Torah could simply have said, "Do not avoid!" From this the Gemara derives that there are times when it is permissible for the finder of a lost object to avoid it, such as an old man for whom collecting the lost object would put him in an embarrassing or inappropriate situation, or a Kohein if gathering the object would require him to enter a cemetery and ritually defile himself. For such cases, the Torah alludes, and he [may] avoid them.

Once, the renowned tzaddik and Torah giant Rabbi Akiva Eiger zt"l, the rav of Pozen, travelled to Warsaw. While there, he made a point of looking up a distant cousin whom he hadn't seen or heard from in many years. This wasn't easy because the cousin was a bit of a recluse, and it took a while to even find him. Still, after persisting, R' Akiva Eiger managed to locate his relative and made arrangements to pay him a visit.

Though eccentric, the cousin was no fool and realized what an honor it was to have such a guest in his home. They spoke at length. Even when R' Akiva Eiger's gabbaim (attendants) motioned to him that there were other things to arrange he took no notice, and continued to sit with his cousin and chat as if there were nothing else on his mind. As a result, he ended up missing a number of pressing appointments.

His gabbaim were annoyed and a little perplexed. After all, the cousin was of little significance, and it was clear to all present that their conversation was not at all enlightening and rather unstimulating. R' Akiva Eiger picked up on their agitation, and preempted the question. "You're wondering why I spent so much time talking to my cousin when there were many other important things to take care of... But in fact, you are wrong – there was nothing as important on my agenda as spending time with my cousin, my flesh and blood.

"The Gemara derives from the wording [of the above passage] "and avoid [Heb. ve-hisalamta, and hide yourself from] them" that in rare circumstances it is appropriate to avoid a lost item, notwithstanding the extreme importance the Torah attaches to returning lost objects. But regarding one's relatives, the prophet Yeshaya says (58:7): 'And from your flesh, do not hide yourself!' Unlike in the above passage, there's no dispensation for the elderly or learned. So, you see, in the face of spending time with my family, there really is nothing more important."

Elul is a month during which, to the best of our ability, we are meant to spend time on introspection, thinking about the areas in our lives that need more attention and coming up with a game plan to address at least some of our shortcomings. Of course, from the above story it emerges that it would be foolish to become so immersed in self-scrutiny as to neglect paying attention to our families, particularly children who often need extra attention during what for them is notably the beginning of a new academic year.

But there's more. Chazal, our Sages, say (Sanhedrin 9b), "Adam karov etel atzmo/man is his own closest relative." If we're forbidden to neglect our familial relationships, even the more distant ones, how much more so must we be careful not neglect our closest relative of all – our neshama – and not allow it to pass through these precious weeks undernourished and lacking true care.

The word for relative, karov, is also the word the Torah uses when describing the process of teshuva/repentance (Devarim/Deuteronomy 30:14):

For this mitzvah (according to some commentaries this refers to the mitzvah of teshuva), which I command you today, isn't hidden from you, nor is it far away... For the matter is close (karov) to you, in your mouth and in your heart...

To succeed in teshuva, we have to treat it like R' Akiva Eiger treated his relative, with respect and with great attentiveness. At times, we may even become so focused on our relative (neshama) that we miss

out on other important (and not so important) things (business, news, leisure activities). That's ok too – everything takes backstage for our own flesh and blood. Have a good Shabbos.

How To Cause Hashem To Seal Us For A Good Year

Rabbi J Rubinstein

Rabbi Daniel Levy of Zurich, used to relate the following incident from the days when he studied under Rabbi Moshe Feinstein. On one occasion Rav Moshe was unwell and was forbidden by his Doctor to speak aloud. His sister Rebetzin Small, emphasised to Rabbi Levy that under no circumstances was Rav Moshe to use his voice. This meant that Rabbi Levy and others who were studying under Rav Moshe, were to answer the halachic queries which came in by phone and check the answers with Rav Moshe. After Rebetzin Small had left the premises a call came in, that a Talmid Chochom was being threatened with eviction from his apartment. Immediately Rav Moshe and Rabbi Levy started contacting the landlords concerned, to sort out the problem. As they were making the calls, Rebetzen Small returned. When she saw what was happening she said to Rav Moshe, "This kindness you are doing, will bring you in to your grave?" Rabbi Levy said he would never forget how Rav Moshe responded. He stood like a soldier, with his hands at his side, his head upright, and said, "This (meaning doing kindness,) is the purpose we were born for" After that, no one uttered another word.

The idea expressed by Rav Moshe is highly appropriate for the Shabbos on which we read Parshas Haazinu, and for this time of the year. In the Parshah it says הצור תמים פעלו כי כל דרכיו משפט אל אמונה – "The Rock His work is perfect, for all his ways are justice a G-d of faithfulness and without wrongdoing. Rav Elya Lopian once explained, a human judge when delivering a verdict, only takes into consideration what the accused himself deserves. He does not factor in, the effect the verdict will have on the family and friends of the accused. But Hashem is "Without wrongdoing" which means that every consequence of the verdict on other people, also has to be justified. Only Hashem can make such an all-encompassing judgement.

This also means, that if a person has a lot of friends or people who depend on him, Hashem is less likely to punish him, because of the effect his suffering will have on them. Rav Lopian said in the name of Rav Simcha Zissel, this is the meaning of the saying in ארחות חיים לראש – "The ways of life" written by the Rosh, ואל תרף מלבקש רעים ואהובים, "You should not desist from seeking to have friends and those who love you" (Par. 90). He was not giving us advice about how to have a better social life, he was telling us how to obtain a good verdict on the Day Of Judgement! The more we help other people the less likely it is, that we will receive a bad verdict, because of the harm that would cause those who receive our help.

In the words of Rav Shlome Wolbe when discussing the importance of helping others (Sefer Ali Shur Vol 2: P. 419), "It means not being egoistical, and not living one's life just for oneself" What better example could one have of this, than Rav Moshe Feinstein? His model attitude, and the teaching of Rav Elya Lopian, should inspire us to think less about ourselves, and more about helping others. Although in fact, we ourselves will benefit from doing so, because it will vastly increase our chances of being inscribed and sealed for a good year.

Scapegoating, An Ancient Tradition

Rabbi Yisrael Rutman (Torah.org)

The story is told of the guy who was turned down for a job as an announcer at a radio station. When a friend asked him why he thought he didn't get the job, he stammered, "B-b-b-because, I'm J-j-j-jewish!" Fill in whatever grievance in life you like, and whatever ethnic group you like, it's all the same. This is not to say that discrimination does not exist; of course it does. But very often the reason for our failures lie within us, and there is a natural human tendency to deny the painful truth about ourselves.

In a recent column in the Washington Post, Robert Samuelson has dared to point the finger, not at the perpetrators of corporate fraud, but at those millions of Americans who were eager partners in the biggest get-rich-quick scheme in history. Although he agrees that the criminals at the top should be punished, he asserts that their malfeasance is by no means the exclusive cause of our economic woes. All those who invested an estimated \$1.1 trillion in mutual funds

in the 90's in what he calls "the democratization of greed" had a hand in inflating the bubble that has now so ruinously burst upon us. Much of what is going on now is a form of scapegoating, of shifting the blame.

The idea of the scapegoat comes from the Bible; but don't blame it on the Jews. Like a lot of things that come from the Bible, a great deal is lost in the translation. In Temple times, on Yom Kippur a goat bearing the sins of the people would be sent off to its death in the wilderness outside Jerusalem. If all went well, a red cord that had been tied around its neck and a corresponding one in the Temple itself, would miraculously turn white. Thus, the idea of the scapegoat, of an innocent being onto whom one can shift his own sins.

Of course, it wasn't as easy as that. It was not just a trick whereby their sins were painlessly cast off onto another. The whitening of the cord only occurred if the prayers and repentance of the people were accepted by G-d. Divine forgiveness had to be earned. And there were years when forgiveness was not forthcoming, and the red cord failed to turn white.

Today, scapegoating represents a certain kind of hypocrisy, of placing the blame on someone else. Anyone can be a scapegoat. Throughout their wanderings, the Jewish people themselves have been the scapegoat of the world, blamed for every ill from communism to capitalism, from the poverty of the Mideast to the destruction of the World Trade Center. Their persecution did not alleviate any of the problems of which they were alleged to be the cause.

Why do people engage in scapegoating? Consciously or otherwise, people think that they can go on living happily ever after if they can somehow avoid responsibility for whatever has gone wrong, whether it be on a societal level or in their own personal lives.

Judaism teaches just the opposite. On Yom Kippur we take the blame. We take the blame for all of our sins: theft, lying, fraud, conspiracy. Indeed, in Neilah, the closing prayer of the day, theft is the sin singled out above all others. Not necessarily outright theft; it also includes cheating, paying wages late, even depriving others of sleep, stealing their rest. We acknowledge our transgressions large and small and ask to be forgiven.

But this does not mean that Yom Kippur is a sad and solemn affair, and that we should feel burdened by guilt. On the contrary, the Talmud describes Yom Kippur as one of the happiest days in the Jewish calendar. This was the day on which Moses came down from Mount Sinai with a new set of Ten Commandments after the first set of stone tablets were broken at the sin of the Golden Calf. Moses and the people had repented, and this marked G-d's forgiveness for their sin. That seminal event determined the character of the day for all time. And it demonstrates that the payoff for facing up to our problems is twofold: not only do we relieve ourselves of the burden of denial, but the reward for our effort may be an outpouring of love and knowledge as vast as the Torah itself.

Facing up to our shortcomings and asking forgiveness (from G-d and from those individuals we have wronged) is the pathway to happiness. The very fact that G-d has ordained such a day, in which we can attain forgiveness shows that He wants to forgive us, wants us to live and do better the next year. This in itself is a great reason to feel not sadness or depression, but joy, on Yom Kippur.

As for the economy, the road to recovery lies not only in stricter regulation and stiffer penalties for corporate crime, but in a moral recovery, as well. Who can say that the "infectious greed" that has eaten away at the American economy has been limited to the princincts of Enron and Arthur Anderson? Who can say on this Yom Kippur that he is pure and done no wrong?

I am a Work in Progress

Rabbi Dovid Green (Torah.org)

I was describing a scene recently that had occurred in a crowded shul where I had gone to pray the afternoon service. A fellow walked in near the end with a look that was rather tenuous and uncertain. He got the siddur open to a page on the back of the book with his finger poised at a certain point. He looked around as if awaiting some cue. The service ended and people started to exit. Seeing that, he asked the fellow next to him if it's over and in a semi-panic state he began to recite haltingly the mourners kaddish from the transliteration at the back of the siddur. Some people gathered around him and afterward

he told them that his mother had just died and he had come to say kaddish for her. I was relating the story partially in admiration of his courage to enter a strange environment and recite strange words in a foreign language aloud, and partially in awe of the powerful lure of an adult child to do something significant for a deceased parent.

My meaning was misunderstood and someone in the group suggested that maybe the people there considered him to be a hypocrite for only coming then to the synagogue. Nothing had been farther from the truth. Actually, that person had been immediately swallowed into a sea of concern and empathy.

It's a little like the bad joke about the boy who hadn't say a word for fifteen years and his parents thought him incapable of speech until one night at dinner when he threw his spoon down in disgust and declared, "Arrrrrrrgg! The soup is terrible!" His mother jumped with joy and exclaimed, "John, you spoke! But, how come you didn't say anything till now?" To which he blithely answers, "Till now the soup was good!"

The parent cares less why he didn't speak till now and focuses on the fact that now he speaks. Even if a person opens his mouth in prayer only in a time of pain and sorrow, that kaddish, that tearful sincere expression is certainly received with joy. Why a person didn't pray till now is less important to the Receiver of prayer. Till now the soup was pretty good! Life was smooth and creamy.

Furthermore, there is a crucial distinction between being a hypocrite and being inconsistent. If a person comes to lay a carpet in my living room and somewhere in the middle of the job I spot him going out to his truck I am not ready to condemn his work on the spot and report him to The Better Business Bureau. Even though the rug is full of bumps and not every corner is buckled down, still, if he goes out to his truck and eats his lunch, the lack of job completion is only an indicator that more work is yet to be done. Why should I panic and come to false conclusions? However, if he enters his truck, revs the engine, heads home and sends me a bill, thereby declaring that he considers the job is complete, then I'll have Ralph Nader on the phone in the drop of a carpet nail.

When person says that he is the archetype of virtue and the model of perfection, as if the job is done, crowning personal errors or institutionalizing human foibles as ideals; these are the boldest invitations to be titled hypocrite.

I asked a great man what the definition of a positive self-esteem is and he answered simply; "Knowing your good points and your bad points!" When striving for goodness, inconsistencies will continue to appear. The moment a person improves in one area there are other areas to be updated. When one dish is being koshered the other dishes may not yet be koshered. If that's being a hypocrite then we could not afford to try to be perfect until we actually were!

There are two faults here. The first is to pretend to be perfect and the other not to at least try to become better. I have seen it displayed on the fancy buildings in Manhattan when under renovation, "Pardon our appearance, work in progress." When we stand honestly before our Father in heaven on the holy day of Yom Kippur it is important to neither feign perfection or to fall into despair.

The healthiest way to succeed may be to hang a sign on the wall of your heart simply declaring, "Pardon my appearance I am a work in progress!"

A Thought From the Haftorah of the First Day of Rosh Hashana

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

The Haftorah for the first day of Rosh Hashana is the story of Chana (Shmuel I Chapter 1). Chana was barren for so many years. Finally, she goes up to the Mishkan, receives abracha from Eli Hakohen and becomes pregnant. Chazal say that she was barren for 19 years and that (according to one Medrash) she was 130 years old when she finally gave birth to Shmuel!

It is most noteworthy that once Eli gave her thebracha, she felt that she did not need to worry anymore. She was so confident in thebracha of Eli Hakohen that she did not go back up to Yerushalayim for aliyah l'regel again. The question is that if she was so confident in Eli's blessing, why did she not go up to Eli in the first year and ask him for abrachaten? What took her so long?

Rav Elya Baruch Finkel cites an interesting comment from Rav Chaim

Kanievsky: Thebrachaof a tzadik or a talmid chochom is much more effective if the one who bestows thebracha“owes a bracha” to the person who he is blessing! This sense of debt increases his connection to the person seeking thebrachaand thebrachathereby becomes much more effective.

That is why the pesukim elaborate on the whole dialog between Chana and Eli. She was mumbling and he mistook her for a drunk woman. She then chastises Eli for his failure to recognize her bitterness of spirit and the fact that she did not consume any wine or strong drink. Chazal likewise find fault with Eli's initial reaction. They say he was “choshed b'ksheirim” (wrongly suspected the innocent). The halacha is that someone who wrongly suspects an innocent person must bless the person who he wrongly suspected.

Yes, abrachafrom any tzadik certainly has significance, but it is extra powerful when that tzadik owes you thebracha. That is why Chana made this case. She could have merely denied the accusation that she was inebriated, but she did more than that. She built the argument that she was wrongly and unjustly accused. Why does she do that? She does that to create indebtedness on the part of Eli. “Eli, you did something terrible. You were choshed b'ksheirim. And now I want something from you. I want a bracha.” That type ofbrachais the most effectivebrachathat a person can receive.

Now, what does this do for you and me? People go to Eretz Yisrael. They seek out tzadikim and receive all kind of brachos, left and right. Rav Elya Baruch Finkel makes the point that if a person can somehow make the m'varech (the one bestowing the blessing) indebted to him, thebrachawill be much more effective. How a person goes about making a tzadik indebted to him may indeed be difficult, especially when dealing with people who don't need anything and don't want anything. But if a person can somehow create that “shibud” (debt) so that the tzadik feels “I owe him,” then thebrachabecomes a whole different level ofbracha.

Rav Elya Baruch Finkel brings a fascinating incident from many years ago in Europe: A certain person's great-grandfather (a Rav Halberstam) passed by a non-Jew who was sitting on a bench. The non-Jew said to Rav Halberstam, “It is my birthday today. I am 116 years old. I have four more years!” Rav Halberstam looked at him and said, “How do you know you have four more years?” The man responded, “Not only that, but...” At that point he opened up his mouth and said, “Every one of my teeth are my own. I am 116 years old and I have all my teeth! And I am going to live another four years!”

Rav Halberstam again said, “Very nice. But how do you know that?” The man explained: When I was a little boy, I was a barber's assistant. I lived in Prague. The Rabbi in Prague at the time was Rav Yechezkel Landau (the Nodeh Beyehudah). When Rabbi Landau came to take his haircut, his custom was to not remove his yarmulka. The haircut was thus to cut around the yarmulka. One time, the Nodeh Beyehudah dozed off during his haircut while sitting in the barber chair and his yarmulka fell off. When he woke up, he noticed that his head was uncovered and he anxiously asked “Where is my yarmulka?” He was upset. The old man told Rabbi Halberstam: “I was a little kid and I found the yarmulka and I gave it back to the Rabbi.” The Nodeh Beyehudah, in gratitude, blessed me and told me: You should live to be 120 and you should never need a doctor.

The blessing came true. The man said “I am 116, I have all my teeth and I have never been to a doctor in my life because I received a blessing from the great rabbi of Prague!” We see what kind of abrachatthat was. The Nodeh Beyehudah was very bothered that his head was uncovered so he felt indebted to this little boy for finding his yarmulka.

Rav Elya Baruch then writes a second incident (perhaps a little closer to home): There was a Jew named Rav Elya Yurkanski (1908-2005), who used to be a maggid shiur in the Mir Yeshiva in Brooklyn, New York. He is no longer alive but, in his time, he had the distinction of being the oldest maggid shiur in any American yeshiva. I have a nephew who learned in his shiur when he was past 90! He said over that during World War I, when Rav Chaim Soloveitchik was running for his life (as was the case with many Jews in Eastern Europe at that time), he passed through Minsk. Rav Elya Yurkanski was a young man at the time and he helped Rav Chaim with all of his suitcases and baggage. Rav Chaim gave him abrachatthat he should live a long life. Here too, the bracha came to fruition. Once again, a bracha from a

Davening Times

ערב ראש השנה	Remember Eiruv Tavshillin
Selichos	6.00am / 7.15am
Candle Lighting	6.27pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Yom Tov	6.27pm
יום א' ראש השנה	
Shacharis	8.30am
תקיעת שופר	Approximately 11.00am
2nd תקיעת שופר	Approximately 1.20pm
Mincha followed by Shiur by R' Mordechai Litwin	6.20pm
ליל ב' ראש השנה	
Maariv	7.29pm
Candle Lighting	Not before 7.29pm
יום ב' ראש השנה	
Shacharis	8.30am
תקיעת שופר	Approximately 11.00am
2nd תקיעת שופר	Approximately 1.20pm
שבת שובה	
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	6.22pm
Candle Lighting	No later than 6.22pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
Mincha	1.30pm / 6.19pm
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	7.24pm
צום גדליה	
Ta'anis Starts	5.37am
Selichos	6.00am / 7.30am / 8.30am
Mincha & Maariv	6.05pm
Ta'anis Ends	7.15pm
עשרת ימי תשובה	
Mon / Thurs	6.00am / 6.30am / 7.45am
Tues / Wed	6.00am / 6.40am / 7.45am
Mincha & Maariv	6.15pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm
ערב יום כפור	
Selichos	6.20am / 7.00am / 7.45am
Mincha	3.00pm
ליל יום כפור	
Candle Lighting	No later than 6.05pm
Kabbolas Shabbos & Yom Tov & תפלת זכר	6.05pm
כל נדרי	6.25pm
יום כפור	
Shacharis	9.00am
Yizkor	Approximately 12.15pm
Mincha	4.05pm
Maariv, Motzei Shabbos & Yom Tov	7.08pm
Sun	7.10am / 8.15am / 9.25am
Mon	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	6.00pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

tzadik certainly helps, but a bracha from a tzadik who feels a debt of gratitude is a far more effective bracha.

While we are on the subject of brachos, it is not only the bracha of a tzadik that is considered significant but rather chazal say not to underestimate the bracha of (even) an ordinary person. So, I will take this opportunity to wish all my talmidim and readership and their families a kesiva v'chasima tova. I feel indebted to all of you for listening to my shiurim and divrei Torah and therefore may it help that mybrachathat Hashem will grant you all a shana tova u'mesuka will be especially effective!