

לעילוי נשמת  
מרת עקא עדנה  
צפורה ע"ה  
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



# עֵלֵי דֵשֶׁה

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"za of Gur

## Day of Acceptance

תקעו בחדש שופר בכסה ליום חגנו. כי חק לישראל  
הוא משפט לאלקי יעקב

*Blow the shofar at the moon's renewal,  
at the time appointed for our festive day.  
Because it is a decree for Yisrael, a judgment  
[day] for the G-d of Yaakov.* (Tehillim 81:4-5)

In what way is Rosh Hashanah a *chok*, an unexplainable decree? The Rebbe R. Zusha explained: As Yidden, we keep all the mitzvos, both those we understand and those we don't. Although we have no understanding of the mitzvos of *parah adumah* and *sha'atnez*, we do them anyway. When Hashem judges us leniently on Rosh Hashanah although we don't deserve it, the nations and the heavenly prosecutors

inscrutable laws, therefore לאלקי משפט - I, too, judge them in an inscrutably lenient manner.<sup>1</sup>

It seems clear that R. Zusha wasn't only referring to keeping mitzvos that are *chukim*. Sometimes the way Hashem conducts this world is itself a *chok*, completely beyond human understanding. When a Yid accepts the lot Hashem grants him, wholeheartedly; when he doesn't ask questions in the face of the *chok* he has been served - such a Yid has actualized כי חק לישראל הוא, and will be given the lenient judgment of יעקב לאלקי משפט.

It is quite reasonable to understand R. Zusha's words this way. He was once asked about the Mishnah (Berachos 54a), "One is obligated to bless Hashem for the bad in the manner he blesses for the good": How could one possibly do so? R. Zusha (whose life was filled with suffering) replied that he, too, couldn't relate to the Mishnah, since he never experienced anything bad in his life. It seems most probable that in his above explanation, R. Zusha meant, as well, that accepting one's lot with love is included in כי חק לישראל הוא משפט לאלקי יעקב.

The *mekubalim* write that for each month, there is a unique combination of the letters of Hashem's Name (יהויה). For each combination, they provide a pasuk

## Hear our Cry

The Gemara (Rosh Hashanah 33b) deduces that the *shofar*-sound called *tekiah* is a *yibba*, the sound of a painful wail, as in the pasuk (Shoftim 5:28) וְתִיבַב אִם סִיטָרָא - *Sisera's mother wailed*. The *Rishonim*<sup>4</sup> further note that our *minhag* is to blow one hundred sounds, just as Sisera's mother cried one hundred cries as she waited for her son's belated arrival. What connection is there between the *heilige tekias shofar* of Rosh Hashanah and the cries of this non-Jewish woman?

Additionally, our *minhag* is to blow the final set of *tekios* during the *Kaddish* that follows *Mussaf*. What is the meaning of these *tekios* in the middle of *Kaddish*?

When people assured Sisera's mother that her son was merely delayed and would eventually arrive laden down with booty, she was comforted and stopped crying.<sup>5</sup> She cried when she feared she had lost her son; once she was reassured that she hadn't, she was calmed.

When we blow *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah, we declare that we are not like Sisera's mother. After all the *tekios* that were interspersed between our own *tefillos* and personal requests, we conclude with *tekios* in the middle of *Kaddish*. These *tekios* declare that even if we are granted all our material requests, we will not stop crying until we witness the fulfillment

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During Tishrei we must work on accepting whatever lot Hashem has granted us, both in *gashmiyus* and in *ruchniyus*, even when it seems like a *chok*.

demand an explanation: why isn't Hashem's justice carried out to the furthest extent of the law? Hashem replies, כי חק לישראל הוא - since Bnei Yisrael keep My *chukim*, My

1 See *Bnei Yissaschar*, Tishrei 3:2 no. 4; Kislev 4 no. 61

4 See *Tosafos*

5 Shoftim 5:29-30

# Day of Acceptance

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where that sequence of the letters can be found. Generally, these are pesukim that seem to honor Hashem's Name and set a tone of distinction for the month. But the pasuk for Tishrei is (Bereishis 12:15), וַיִּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שְׂרֵי כְּרֶעֶה – *And the officials of Pharaoh saw [Sarah]*; the last letters of these words spell out the combination of הו"ה that relates to Tishrei. This pasuk is from Avraham's fourth *nisayon*, when Sarah was abducted by Pharaoh. This was the hardest of the ten *nisayonos*, since it was not about *gashmiyus* but *ruchniyus*; Mitzrayim was the darkest, most impure place in the world. Indeed, as soon as Sarah was released, Avraham was made to leave the country, as the pasuk says (12:19), קַח וְלֶךְ – *take her and go!*<sup>2</sup>

Since וַיִּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שְׂרֵי כְּרֶעֶה discusses a time and place of darkness, why is it the pasuk that alludes to the combination of the *Shem* for Tishrei?

The answer is that that's exactly the point: this pasuk contains the greatness of Avraham and the lesson we must learn from him: to accept all our trials with love, even those that relate to *ruchniyus*. If we learn and apply this lesson, we will be in a place of great advantage for the judgment of Rosh Hashanah.

The Mishnah in Avos (5:3) teaches: "Avraham Avinu was given ten tests, and he passed all of them. This demonstrates how beloved Avraham Avinu is." How does the knowledge of Avraham's belovedness affect us? The answer is that each time Avraham withstood a *nisayon*, he bestowed on all his posterity the ability to do likewise. This strength and these abilities have been passed down to us.

Rashi (Bereishis 17:19) cites Chazal<sup>3</sup> that Yitzchak's name alludes to Avraham's ten

(י) *nisayonos*; Sarah's ninety (צ) year lifetime; the eighth (ח) day on which Yitzchak received his *bris milah*; and Avraham's one-hundred (ק) year lifetime. Why does Yitzchak's name reference Avraham's ten *nisayonos*, most of which occurred before Yitzchak was born? The answer is, as we learned above, that Yitzchak became capable of withstanding such tests as a result of Avraham's passing them. This is why we say in davening during these days, ועקידת יצחק לזרעו של יעקב היום ברחמים, תזכור – *The akeidah of Yitzchak please recall today with mercy for the offspring of Yaakov*. Yitzchak's descendants – Yaakov and his offspring – are forever enriched with the power of withstanding *nisayon*, as a result of Yitzchak's triumph in the *nisayon* of the *akeidah*.

When Avraham was tested with a *nisayon* in *ruchniyus* – that of descending to Mitzrayim, the darkest place on earth – he accepted the command of Hashem. Indeed, even there Hashem's Name is found – in וַיִּרְאוּ אֹתָהּ שְׂרֵי כְּרֶעֶה. Even so, the letters of Hashem's Name appear at the ends of the words, since at a time of *nisayon* Hashem hides His Presence.

During Tishrei we must work on accepting whatever lot Hashem has granted us, both in *gashmiyus* and in *ruchniyus*, even when it seems like a *chok*. The pasuk says about Rosh Hashanah בְּכֶסֶה לְיוֹם הַגִּנּוּי, כיסוי, hiddenness, since the moon is hidden at that time. If on Rosh Hashanah one chooses to feel true acceptance for whatever portion Hashem has served him, without exception and without question, even when it seems so full of כיסוי – he has declared Hashem King in the truest sense.

(ראש השנה תשפ"ג – יום א' מאמר א')

# Process of Elimination

In *Avinu Malkeinu*, we make two very similar requests, in sequence: אבינו מלכנו כלה כל צר ומשטין מעלינו – *Our Father, our King, destroy every enemy and evil-speaker from upon us*; אבינו מלכנו – *Our Father, our King, seal the mouths of our evil-speakers and our prosecutors*. This needs explanation. Once those who speak evil of us have been destroyed, as we first ask, what need is there to silence them? Another question: Why is the first request phrased in the singular form (כל צר ומשטין) and the second in the plural form (משטינו ומקטרגנו)?

We may explain that משטינו ומקטרגנו refers to our many heavenly evil-speakers and prosecutors: all the angels we created with our sins who now testify against us before Hashem. We daven to Hashem to silence them. But צר ומשטין are the foes we face in this world: צר is the *yetzer hara*, who tries to stop us from serving Hashem properly, as the pasuk (Tehillim 27:12) says, אַל תִּתְּנֵנִי בְּיַד בֹּנֵפֶשֶׁת, צָרִי – *Do not deliver me to the hands of my foes*.<sup>19</sup> And משטין refers to anything that stands in our way to impede our *avodas Hashem*, as the pasuk says (Bamidbar 22:22), וַיִּתְּנָב אֱמָלָךְ ה' בְּדַרְךָ לְשָׁטָן לוֹ, – *and an angel of Hashem stood in the road to impede him*.

First we daven to Hashem that He remove all the obstacles that make it difficult for us to serve Him properly, and then we ask that in the areas that we stumbled in the past, He silence our prosecutors on High.

(ראש השנה תשפ"ג – יום א' מאמר ג')

19 See *Sfas Emes (Likutim, Shoftim s.v. v'lo)* who explains that this refers to the *yetzer hara*.

2 See Rashi

3 Bamidbar Rabbah 18:21

## Hear our Cry

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of *yisgadal v'yiskadash Shmei rabbah*, when the glory of Hashem's Kingship will finally be revealed!

The halachah is that if one coats a *shofar* with gold, it is valid as long as the מקום הנחת הפה, the place where the mouth touches the *shofar*, remains uncoated.<sup>6</sup> As long as the מקום הנחת הפה of our *tefillos* – the most piercing, heartfelt part, remains uncoated with gold, and is still a pure cry of מלוך על כל העולם כולו בכבודך – *Rule, Hashem, over the entire world with Your glory!* then even if we coat other parts of it with gold, asking for our personal needs, it is a valid *tefillah*.

May Hashem help us daven<sup>7</sup> for and merit seeing His rulership over the entire world.

(ראש השנה תשפ"ג – קודם התקיעות)

Even if we are granted all our material requests, we will not stop crying until we witness the fulfillment of *yisgadal v'yiskadash Shmei rabbah*

The *Tur*<sup>7</sup> states that the word שופר serves as an acronym for אין שטן ואין פגע רע – *there is no adversary and no misfortune* (Melachim I 5:18). The *Taz*<sup>8</sup> points out the obvious problem: שופר does not contain an *alef*, so where is the אין alluded to?

*Sefarim hakedoshim* teach that when a person sins, he is forgetting the אלופו של עולם, the Chief of the world. This is why the word חט, sin, is pronounced like חט, with a silent *alef*; it alludes to the אלופו של עולם Whom the sinner has forgotten. When the *shofar* is blown, awakening Yidden to *teshuvah*, the sinner is reminded of the אלופו של עולם. It is this extra *alef*, restored to us by the *shofar*, that is the *alef* of אין שטן ואין פגע רע.

(ראש השנה תשפ"ג – יום א' מאמר ב')

6 O.C. 586:16

7 O.C. 585

8 7

## Sweet Times

Our *minhag* is to eat sweet foods on Rosh Hashanah, in keeping with the pasuk (Nechemiah 8:10), וְשָׂתוּ אֶכְלוּ מִשְׁמֵנִים וְשָׂתוּ אֶכְלוּ מִמִּתְקִים – *Eat rich foods and drink sweet beverages*. We eat an apple dipped in honey (some also refrain from eating sour foods) and ask Hashem to bless us with a sweet new year.<sup>13</sup>

There is another type of “sweets” worth enjoying on Rosh Hashanah, as well. The pasuk (Shir Hashirim 5:16) says, חֲכֹו מִמִּתְקִים וְכָלוּ מִחֲמֵדִים – *His palate is most sweet, and all of Him is a delight*. How can we refer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu as “sweet”? The Midrash<sup>14</sup> explains that this refers to Hashem's anticipation and acceptance of Klal Yisrael's *teshuvah*. The Midrash expounds: “There is no sweeter palate than this... Consider a person who was entirely wicked all his days, and at the end of his life became a pure *tzaddik*.

The pasuk says of him (Yechezkel 33:12), וְרָשַׁעֲתָ הָרָשָׁע לֹא יִכָּשֵׁל בַּיּוֹם שׁוּבוֹ מִרְשָׁעוֹ – *as for the wickedness of the wicked person – he shall not stumble over it on the day of his repentance from his wickedness.*”

These are the “sweets” of Rosh Hashanah, that we must – and can! – do *teshuvah*.

The story is told that Rav Meir Shapiro had an outstanding *talmid* named Efraim. One day Efraim took ill. No avenue of medicine or treatment was left unexplored, but to everyone's great sorrow, Efraim passed away. In his *hesped*, Rav Meir Shapiro invoked the pasuk (Yirmiyahu 31:19), הֲבֵן יִקְרֶה לִי אֶפְרַיִם אִם יִלְדֶה שְׁעֵשְׂעִים כִּי מִדֵּי דְבָרֵי בּוֹ זָכַר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ עוֹד – *Is Efraim My favorite son or a delightful child, that whenever I speak of him I remember him more and more?*<sup>15</sup> Rav Meir Shapiro explained: הֲבֵן יִקְרֶה לִי אֶפְרַיִם אִם יִלְדֶה שְׁעֵשְׂעִים – Efraim was such a wonderful youth. But

13 See Rama, O.C. 583:1

14 Bamidbar Rabbah 10:1; Shir Hashirim Rabbah 6:1

15 We recite this pasuk in Rosh Hashanah davening, as well as in the *haftarah* of the second day.

16 Sefer Hoshea is composed of the *navi's* rebuke toward Bnei Efraim for their sins.

17 See *Zera Kodesh*, Rosh Hashanah s.v. *hasovel*; *Divrei Chaim*, beginning of Noach, who proves this from *Kav Hayashar*. See also *Avodas Yisrael*, Bereishis 6:14; *Sfas Emes*, Nitzavim s.v. *Ki hamitzvah hazos*

18 כַּמַּיִם הַפְּנִיִּים לִפְנֵימֵי כֵן לֵב הָאָדָם לְאָדָם – *As water reflects a face back to a face, so one's heart is reflected back to him by another* (Mishlei 27:19).

מִדֵּי דְבָרֵי בּוֹ – whenever I speak of him, of how much he accomplished in his short lifetime, זָכַר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ עוֹד – I remember how much potential he had for עוֹד, for further, phenomenal growth toward becoming an extraordinary *talmid chacham*.

In its context, this pasuk is addressed to Shevet Efraim, who committed serious *aveiros*.<sup>16</sup> If so, why does their mention evoke such thoughts of their positive potential? *Kadmonim* and *sefarim hakedoshim* say that when a person sins, the heavenly prosecutors are not allowed to make mention of it to Hashem. Just as one would never bring a basket of manure into a human king's palace, there can be no mention of sin before Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Instead, the *malachim* announce in *Shamayim* that a new manner of *teshuvah* has been originated – for such-and-such a sin.<sup>17</sup>

Following this reasoning, the greater one's sin is, the greater is his opportunity for *teshuvah*. Thus, Hashem declares, מִדֵּי זָכַר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ – whenever I speak of him, even if he has committed serious sins, זָכַר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ עוֹד – I remember how much potential he has for growth; how he can do *teshuvah* and become great!

Any Yid, even a sinner, can accomplish great levels of *teshuvah*. The above pasuk concludes with Hashem's great love for Bnei Efraim: עַל כֵּן הִמּוֹ מְעִי לוֹ רַחֵם אֶרְחַמֶנּוּ – *Therefore, My innermost self yearns for him; I will surely take pity on him – the word of Hashem*. Since one's feelings toward another are reflected back to him,<sup>18</sup> Hashem's love for Bnei Yisrael is mirrored in our hearts, and can ignite in us a yearning to come close to Him through pure *teshuvah me'ahavah*.

(ראש השנה תשפ"ג – יום א' מאמר ב')

# תְּפִלַּת הַלְעָנִי – The Pauper's Prayer

In the *tefillas* of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur we say, ותהלה לך, תהלה לך, ותקוה טובה לדורשיך, ופתחון פה למיחלים – *And so, Hashem, grant Your nation honor; those who fear You, praise; those who seek You, positive hope; and those who await You, an opportunity to open their mouths.*

What do we mean when we ask for a פתחון פה, a “mouth-opening”? Some explain that we are davening for the times of Mashiach, when we will finally be able to respond to the ridiculing questions the nations badger us with. But is this why we anticipate Mashiach, so that we can finally talk back to the non-Jews? Besides, the Kingship of Hashem will be so clear that there won't be any questions at all. And who knows if the nations of the world will even still exist at that time?

We may suggest that when we daven for a פתחון פה, we are asking for the ability to open our mouths and utter a true, pure *tefillah*.<sup>9</sup> We must ask ourselves honestly: are we truly *mispallel*? We all daven three times daily, and when dealt a more challenging *pekel*, our *tefillas* are particularly intense – but these may still not be bona fide *tefillas* the way a *tefillah* should be.

Someone told me that he was once staying in an area where there were only nine *frum* Yidden, so it was difficult to complete a *minyan*. On one occasion they asked a non-*frum* Jew to help complete their *minyan*. Although he had never davened in his life, the newcomer did his best to daven along from the *siddur* he was handed. When they reached *Shemoneh Esrei*, he continued davening aloud, unaware that this part of davening was meant to be said quietly. Without knowing better, the man read, out loud, *every word* printed in that part of the *siddur* – both *mashiv haru'ach u'morid*

*hageshem* and *morid hatal*; all the insertions for the *aseres yemei teshuvah* (though it was not that time of year), and so on. This person related that the other *mispallelim* tried hard to contain their laughter at this man's ignorance.

When I heard this story, I thought to myself, *Fools! If we feel like laughing in such a scenario, it is only because we don't appreciate the value of tefillah!* The Ribbono Shel Olam awaited this Jew's davening since the day he was born; he had never davened until now, and it's possible he would never daven again. This is like a child who is delayed in speech. When he finally pronounces his first word, his parents are ecstatic. In a much greater measure, Hashem was overjoyed to hear this Yid's belated *tefillah*, to finally hear him utter a Jewish word. When he said in ignorance, מי כמוך אב הרחמים, זוכר יצוריו לחיים ברחמים – *Who is like You, Merciful Father, Who remembers His creations for life, with mercy*, no doubt these words aroused great *rachamim* in *Shamayim*. Had I been present, I would have asked Hashem to allow my own *tefillas* to ascend with the *rachamim* that was aroused by that Yid's *tefillah*.

When we daven, we take care to prepare ourselves: we dress properly, we gird ourselves with a *gartel*, we daven with the proper *niggunim*. We even recite portions of the *Zohar hakadosh* before *tekias shofar*. And yet, our *tefillas* are lacking in their essence.

It is written<sup>10</sup> of Maharash M'Kenon that even after he mastered the Kabbalistic secrets of the *kavanos* of *tefillah*, he still approached davening like a small child who feels that he has no understanding at all and is totally dependent on his mother. When we daven, it is always with a back-up plan: we will beg Hashem for our needs, but just in

case He doesn't grant our requests, we will do X, Y and Z. We are lacking a feeling of broken-heartedness; our *tefillas* lack the element of תְּפִלַּת הַלְעָנִי – *A prayer of the pauper* (Tehillim 102:1), about which is written (ibid 18), פְּנֵה אֶל, [Hashem] תִּפְלֵת הָעֲרֵר וְלֹא בָּה אֶת תְּפִלָּתָם – *[Hashem] turned to the prayer of each devastated one and did not despise their prayer.*

The Midrash<sup>11</sup> teaches that the תִּפְלֵת הָעֲרֵר that Hashem does not turn down is the “one *tefillah* that they have left: that which they daven on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.” When a Yid daven on the *Yamim Nora'im* with the feeling that this is his one and only opportunity to daven – then Hashem will not turn away his *tefillah*. It is this manner of feeling that we unfortunately lack in our *tefillas*.

At the time of Mashiach we will gain a new clarity in the reality of the world. We will see and feel that the whole of Creation belongs to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, that our every breath is a gift from Him. Hashem's Kingship will be clear for all to see. At that time we will have a פתחון פה, we will have the capacity to daven a genuine *tefillah*, uttered with the proper mindset.

Until such a time, we continue to ask Hashem to accept our *tefillas*, whatever state they are in. On the pasuk (Shir Hashirim 2:4) וְדִלּוּגוֹ, וְדִלּוּגוֹ עָלַי אֶהְבֶּה, the Midrash<sup>12</sup> says, *His skipping is beloved to Me*. Even when a Yid makes mistakes in his *tefillas*, skipping over parts, they are still beloved to Hashem. But it is not only about missing words. When our davening is missing the essence of *tefillah*, when it lacks *kavanah* and proper feeling, we ask that Hashem accept it lovingly even in its present state, as וְדִלּוּגוֹ עָלַי אֶהְבֶּה. After all, even our *tefillas* contain some measure of broken-heartedness.

(ראש השנה תשפ"ג – יום ב' מאמר ב')

9 See *Pri Tzaddik*, Rosh Hashanah 205:24; *Chashavah L'Tovah* p. 108 s.v. *yesh*

10 See *Mishnah Berurah*, 25:42

11 Midrash Tehillim, ad loc.

12 Shir Hashirim Rabbah 2:15