



Table Talk



Volume 2 Issue 2

Rosh Hashanah

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Birthdays



Happy Birth-
day to the
world
5570

Happy Birth-
day to ADAM
AND EVE who
were born on
Rosh Hasha-
nah and by
extension

A very special
Happy Birth-
day to people
everywhere!

A BIG Bite of Inspiration

The Shofar has many profound messages; its most familiar message is of course to remind us of the *Akeidat Yitzchak* (binding of Isaac) and the ram that takes the place of Isaac as sacrificial offering. But there are many other messages inherent in the Shofar's sounds as well.

There is a particularly powerful story, which occurred one Rosh Hashana in the late 1920's that really sums up the multi-tiered inspirational messages contained within the shofar's sounds.

It became known to Rav Kook on the eve of Rosh Hashana that there was a particular construction project that was quickly nearing completion, and that those involved in building this particular edifice, planned to continue to work toward completing this project, even on Rosh Hashana. Obviously saddened by this news, Rav Kook decided upon a strategy as to how he must address this situation.

The next morning, Rav Kook sent one of his *gabbaim* to visit the

workers, and to bring a Shofar with him. Rav Kook gave the *gabbai* careful instructions not to speak any harsh words, rather to merely go to the construction site, and to simply sound the Shofar.

Upon hearing the familiar sounds of the Shofar, construction ceased, and most of the laborers quickly changed their clothing and made their way to synagogues.

When the *gabbai* returned to the synagogue, he asked Rav Kook how come the rabbi did not simply go and address these workers himself; surely a visit from the esteemed Chief Rabbi would have encouraged all of the labourers to join the many who had decided to return to the synagogue with the *gabbai*.

Rav Kook's answer is perhaps the most powerful point of this entire story. Rav Kook explained that had he arrived at the site, surely he would have caused great embarrassment, even shame to the many workers! Although the public desecration of this holiest of days certainly pained him deeply, the pain he felt when the Torah's honour was tarnished in such a public manner enveloped his entire being; but what pained him most was to know that there were Jews who might go through an entire Rosh Hashana and not hear the beautiful sweet sounds of the Shofar.

The Shofar's sweet sounds remind us of the beauty that is a Jewish way of life, the enrichment, fulfilment and contentment that Torah can bring to each of our lives. The Shofar's sounds reach that pure spark within each of us, and softly remind us that we can indeed leave behind all those issues and confusing circumstances that cloud our vision- our vision of ourselves, our vision of the world, and our vision of each other.



Side Dish

"Time is infinitely more precious than money, and there is nothing common between them. You can not accumulate time, you can not borrow time, and you can never tell how much time you have left in the bank of life. Time is life

Wishing you all a healthy and happy New Year."

B N Levy

SMILE

A Jewish parent calls his son. The father says to David, "I hate to tell you, but your mother and I can't stand each other anymore, and we are divorcing. That's it!! I want to live out the rest of my years in peace. I am telling you now, so you and your sister shouldn't go into shock later when I move out." The father hangs up, and David immediately calls his sister and tells her the news. The sister says, "I'll handle this." The sister calls and gets her father on the phone. She pleads to her father, "Don't do ANYTHING 'til David and I get there! We will be there Friday night." The father says, "All right, all right already." When the father hangs up the phone he hollers to his wife, "Okay, they're coming for Rosh Hashana."

Celebrating Success

Every person should have two pockets. In one, [there should be a note that says] *bishvili nivra ha'olam*, 'for my sake was the world created.' In the second, [there should be a note that says] *anokhi afar va'efer*, 'I am dust and ashes.

One must know how to use them, each one in its proper place and right time. For many make the mistake of using them wrongly.

Make this year a Success!





Table Talk



And every object shall know that You have made it; and every creature shall understand that You have created it; and every thing that has the breath of life in its nostrils shall proclaim: Hashem, the Hashem of Israel, is king, and His sovereignty rules over all...

The Hebrew language has no word for "things," for "objects" or for "stuff." Even the words "physical" and "matter" are borrowed terms. In Hebrew, all things are *dvarim* -- "words." All that exists is Hashem and his words. After all, Hashem spoke and the world came into being. The magic of it is that these words are so tightly packed, we do not realize they are words -- we perceive them as things; independent, autonomous things that are just here because they are here, as though they have no source at all. An ancient Midrash tells us that when Adam awoke to life, he found all the other creatures standing over him, worshipping him. Being the very first creatures, they realized that someone must have formed them -- and Adam seemed the obvious candidate. Adam realized otherwise, so he communicated with them and brought all the creation to the awareness that there must be a Higher Being, not just another creature, but an Unlimited Creator, that brought all creatures into being and continues to sustain and enliven each one of them -- himself included. Since then, that has been the mission of every descendant of Adam: To bring all creation to this higher state of consciousness.

More Inspiration

One of the interesting phenomena of the high holidays is that so many people are moved to attend synagogue services. Our synagogues that are often quite empty throughout much of the year are suddenly filled to capacity. What is it about the various benedictions and readings we recite together on Rosh Hashana that is supposed to carry over into our entire year, and inspire us to seek a deeper connection, to reach a heightened spiritual consciousness? Why, if the essence of Rosh Hashana is prayer, as the *Sefat Emet* suggests, is there such a disconnect for so many people who find their way to the synagogues on these three important dates, only to return to their year long anonymity until the following Rosh Hashana? Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik zt'l wrote that many perceive prayer as a conversation, a dialogue with the Divine. Rabbi Soloveitchik suggests that *tefila* is much more than a conversation, or a dialogue between acquaintances. *Tefila*, said Rabbi Soloveitchik should be experienced as though we have come so close to the Divine within each of us that we feel the collision, of colliding with Hashem's presence.

Tefila is not a random discussion between two distant acquaintances, rather the most intimate of conversations between man and Hashem. Prayer, as it is most often experienced by man in our human frailty, is often very self centered-either out of a sense of obligation, or as an outgrowth and response to a personal need or challenging circumstance. But *tefila*, prayer in its purest form, is the experience of calling out to Hashem, not from the depths of despair and pain, but rather from a space of comfort, heightened spiritual consciousness and love. Sometimes in all our efforts we lose sight of the very reason we are actually taking the time to do the particular ritual act. Often, Rav Weinberger points out, we are "circling around" the various *mitzvot*, and missing the very purpose that is behind each of the mitzvot. On Rosh Hashana, we take a step back, and remember that in all our "circling around," in all the many concepts and rituals associated with Torah, that each of these *mitzvot* are opportunities for us to strengthen our connection with Hashem, to converse, embrace and "collide" with Hashem, in the purest of ways. Our prayers on Rosh Hashana allow us to transition from the many requests that emanate out of this confusion of circling around the mitzvot, and enter into prayer in its purest form, of a sincere, intimate conversation with Hashem. Our *tefilot* on Rosh Hashana, therefore serve as the ideal paradigm through which every mitzvah should be viewed, as opportunities to once again feel, rejoice with, and embrace Hashem's presence in each of our lives.

So, in reality, our prayer throughout the entire High Holiday period is an amazing opportunity for growth, for a deeper awareness, and heightened consciousness of Hashem's presence in our lives. It is this very idea that lies at the foundation not solely of prayer, but of each and every mitzvah; which becomes evident when we stop "circling around" focusing solely on the specific details, and begin to simply open our minds and hearts.

The Torah never mentions explicitly that Hashem judges the world on Rosh Hashanah. This tradition is mentioned in the mishna. The Gemara does not, however, inform us as to why the Almighty selected Rosh Hashanah as the trial date. True, this is when the year begins, but this itself requires an explanation: why did Hashem determine that for purposes of judgment the year begins in Tishrei?

Rosh Hashanah falls at the height of the harvest season, when a farmer once and for all sees the fruits of his labour and experiences the pride of productive toil. Specifically at this point in the agricultural season, Hashem found it necessary to humble mankind, to ensure that they recognize their dependence on His kindness. He therefore instituted the first of Tishrei as the most intimidating day of the year, the day on which we must stand trial before His tribunal. This helps prevent an arrogant sense of self-sufficiency and independence that might otherwise overcome the proud farmer.

The Yamim Nora'im period is intended to be a humbling experience for us all. It is meant to remind the individual of his powerlessness and dependence on Hashem's mercy. Over the course of the Days of Awe one must realize that his very life, not to mention his health and livelihood, rests on Hashem's compassion, compassion that we must earn through our conduct. Herein lies perhaps the most humbling recognition of all - that we have not earned divine compassion. We come face-to-face with ourselves and recognize that we are undeserving, by our own merit, of Hashem's mercy. Only once we have arrived at this conclusion and undertaken a concerted effort to improve can we go into Yom Kippur, ask for forgiveness, and thereby earn Hashem's favour.