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## Rosh HaShanah - 072 Opening Our Heart Before Rosh HaShanah

### *Rosh HaShanah - The Day When Man Is Remembered*

Baruch Hashem, we are soon, approaching Rosh HaShanah, may it come upon us for blessing. Rosh HaShanah is called the first day of the world. Of Rosh HaShanah it is said, "This day is the beginning of Your actions, the remembrance of the first day."

The Gemara has an argument in the world was created on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month of Nissan or on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul. If so, there is a question. How is Rosh HaShanah, the 1<sup>st</sup> day of Tishrei, the birthday of the world? If anything, Rosh HaShanah should be either the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul or on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nissan, so why is Rosh HaShanah on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishrei?

Rabbeinu Nissim asks this question, and he answers in a very fundamental manner. He answers that the primary creation is the human being (man is called the "crown of creation"), and was created on the sixth day. If the world was created on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul, then the sixth day of Creation - the day when man and woman were created - was the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishrei. Thus, Rosh HaShanah, the day when Hashem remembers Creation and His original handiwork, is on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishrei, which was the sixth day of Creation - the day when man was created. This is because Hashem's primary handiwork is the creation of the human being.

Thus, Hashem remembers the first day of Creation on Rosh HaShanah, and since His primary creation was man, Rosh HaShanah is when Hashem remembers the day that man was created, which was the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishrei. Although Creation was on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Elul, the primary creation, man, was on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishrei. Therefore, the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishrei was chosen to be Rosh HaShanah, because on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishrei, it was truly "the first day of Creation" - for it was the day when man was created.

### *How Rosh HaShanah Is Unique For The Jewish People*

When Adam was created, were there Jews and gentiles? No. On Rosh HaShanah, when Hashem judges the world, whom does Hashem judge? Does He only judge the Jewish people? On Rosh HaShanah Hashem judges all of the creations, even the angels. What, then, is unique about Rosh HaShanah for the Jewish nation? On Rosh HaShanah we say, "*They all pass before Him in judgment*" - all creations without exception are judged individually by Hashem. So how, then, is Rosh HaShanah unique to the Jewish people?

The prayers on Rosh HaShanah contain verses that describe *malchiyos* (Hashem's dominion),

*zichronos* (Hashem's remembrance of the good deeds of our past) and *shofaros* (verses about the *shofar* at the giving of the Torah and of the future). The Jewish people on Rosh HaShanah proclaim Hashem as king, through reciting *malchiyos*. Do the nations proclaim Him as king? If we go out into the street and ask a *goy* if he proclaimed Hashem as the king today, what will the gentile answer? He doesn't even know that today is Rosh HaShanah!

When we recite the verses of *zichronos*, we remember the *Akeidah*, when Avraham was prepared to offer Yitzchok as a sacrifice to Hashem willingly with a complete heart. Ever since then, as descendants of Avraham and Yitzchok, we received the *zechus* of the *Akeidah*. What about Yitzchok's son Esav? Did Esav receive the *zechus* of the *Akeidah* from his father and grandfather? If the Jewish people, who descend from Yaakov, have the *zechus* of the *Akeidah*, then why doesn't Esav also have this *zechus*? Why won't the *zechus* of the *Akeidah* also work for Esav and his descendants? Why is the *zechus* of the *Akeidah*, which we mention in the verses of *zichronos*, only a *zechus* for the Jewish people?

The answer to this is because the Gemara teaches that Esav was called a "*yisrael mumar*," a Jew who became an apostate, one who doesn't continue in the ways of his fathers. When one doesn't continue his father's path and ideals, he does not receive any merits from his father's life. Thus, the *zechus* of the *Akeidah* was only given to the Jewish people, who descended from Yaakov, who continued in his father's ways, and it was not shared by the descendants of Esav, who didn't continue in his father's ways.

*Shofar* is another aspect of Rosh HaShanah that is unique only to the Jewish people. The other nations don't blow *shofar*, and even if they would blow it, it is not regarded as anything. If one hears a *shofar* sound blown by a gentile, he does not fulfill the *mitzvah*, and he did not hear the *shofar* at all.

#### *Our Main Avodah On Rosh HaShanah – Declaring Hashem As Our King*

*Malchiyos* is about declaring Hashem as the King over us, and this is our main *avodah* on Rosh HaShanah: To declare Hashem as our King. When one is in shul all day on *Rosh HaShanah* and says all the holy prayers and hears *shofar* and has *kavanah*, does he also make sure to accept Hashem as the King when he says *malchiyos*?

Many people fulfill the *mitzvah* of *shofar* and they *daven* all day on *Rosh HaShanah*, but do people accept Hashem's Kingship upon themselves? Many times people don't even know what they are saying when they recite the *Malchiyos*! And even when they know what they are saying, many times they usually don't have *kavanah* to fulfill this *mitzvah* and they are not aware of what this declaration means for them. Can this be called declaring Hashem as King....?

Compare this to the following. If you read a contract that says you own 100 dollars to someone, is that considered as if you admitted that you owe the 100 dollars? Does reading the words alone mean anything? Of course it doesn't mean anything. Even if you read every word of it, it doesn't mean anything if you have no idea what you are saying and you don't mean it.

When people declare Hashem as King, how is this *mitzvah* done? Can a person do this even if it wouldn't be part of the *nusach* of *davening*, or is it just a part of the *davening* for him and that's why he says it...? If there wouldn't be a *machzor* for Rosh HaShanah, what we do for *malchiyos*? Is *malchiyos*, declaring Hashem as King, just a part of the *machzor* on Rosh HaShanah?

Consider also the following. Avraham *Avinu* started the prayer of *Shacharis*, and the Men of Great Assembly enacted it as an obligation for every day. But before this prayer existed, how did everyone declare *Malchiyos*? Avraham *Avinu* didn't have a *siddur*. What did he say for *malchiyos* then?

The Rambam said that the Men of Great Assembly established the prayers because people didn't know the *nusach* (the wording of the prayers), so they made an official *nusach*. On one hand, the established prayers we say are to our advantage, because now we know what to say. But on the other hand, there is also a drawback. A child is brought to shul and his father hands him a *machzor* and tells him to say the words, and the child gets used to saying these words each year, and that is how he learns how to do it. He gets used to thinking that Rosh HaShanah is to say the words of the *Machzor*, to say some of the *Piyutim* and to leave out others, and to hear the *shofar*, and that this is Rosh HaShanah.

If there wouldn't be a *machzor*, how would we declare Hashem as King? When the Men of Great Assembly enacted the prayers of *malchiyos*, *zichronos* and *shofaros*, they were not coming to do away with what existed until then. There was always a concept of declaring Hashem as King, and they just made an official *nusach* for it. Making Hashem as King over us is not something we just say in the *machzor*. It is to really accept upon us that Hashem is our King!

The first step for us, then, starts before Rosh HaShanah. You need to accept Hashem upon yourself already before Rosh HaShanah, and you can't wait until Rosh HaShanah and just fall into it. Compare it to the following. The meal on Erev Yom Kippur prepares us for the fast on Yom Kippur, and if we don't eat on Erev Yom Kippur, we don't have the strength to fast on Yom Kippur. If one remembers on Yom Kippur that he didn't eat before, he can't do anything about it. He can't eat now. What about if a person remembers on Rosh HaShanah that he forgot to make Hashem the King before Rosh HaShanah?

The *avodah* of Rosh HaShanah needs to start before Rosh HaShanah, and that is clear. In the days approaching Rosh HaShanah at least, with a few days remaining left, we must know that the *avodah* of *malchiyos* starts now.

### *Make A Small Change and Do It From Your Heart*

Rosh HaShanah is when one truly makes Hashem into the King, and understandably there are many levels in this. But how do we actually do it?

A king is one who gives orders and his servants carry out his orders. There are two ways to approach Rosh HaShanah – either Hashem is *Avinu* (Our Father) or He is *Malkeinu* (Our King). On Rosh HaShanah, we relate to Hashem as *Malkeinu*, our King. A king is one who gives orders and his servants listen. Therefore, every person on his level needs to make Hashem into the King over him.

This doesn't mean of course that we need to become perfect when it comes to this, because that isn't being realistic for most people. Therefore, each person on his own level should take a small resolution upon himself in which he will accept Hashem as the King over him. Every person, on his own level, needs to find one small thing in which he will be better at this year, and to do it because he wants to do Hashem's will.

That is all the external part of what we need to do. There is also an internal part. Elul stands for *Ani L'Dodi v'Dodi li* (I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me), and the *Gra* and others say that this stands for the verse "*U'mal es levovcha v'es levav zarecha*," "*And you shall circumcise your heart and the hearts of your offspring*," meaning that the *avodah* in Elul is to open our heart.

The moon is called *levanah* in Hebrew from the word *lev* (heart). On Rosh HaShanah, the moon is covered. The hint of this is that a person's heart is also covered, and one needs to take off the covering over the heart and reveal the heart underneath.

When we accept Hashem as King over us, there is what we have to do in action and there is the

internal part. The external part is to take a small resolution upon ourselves for the year. The internal part is that it should come from our heart, meaning that we are making a small change in our life for Hashem because we really want to do this. We are putting our heart into it. We want to do it!

If any changes we make are not coming from our heart, if we are just doing it but we don't really want to do it and we are not putting our hearts into it, then our actions are missing the main part. "Hashem wants the heart." Each person should therefore change something in his life this year, some small improvement that he can handle, and he should do it from the depths of his heart!

Every day by *Maariv* we say, "And His kingship they accept upon themselves willingly," which means that according to how much *ratzon* (will) we have, that is how much of His *malchiyos* we are accepting upon ourselves. On one hand, a person needs to take a small resolution that he will do for the year, which will be practical, for a few months, or for a few weeks, or at least for the few days of *Aseres Y'mei Teshuva* at the very least - whatever he can do. But the inner part is to do it with our heart - to make any change in our life because we really, really want to do this for Hashem.

Many times a person takes a resolution upon himself but he doesn't open his heart in the process. His heart remains as before, on the same level as a child's. Whenever we take any change upon ourselves, it needs to come from a genuine place in ourselves, from a true desire in our heart to do Hashem's will. Every year a person should take another resolution that is from a truer place in the heart.

### *Putting Our Heart Into Our Torah Learning*

The audience here are young *bonei Torah*, who are *zoche* to learn Torah all day in the *beis midrash*, *Baruch Hashem*, (many are not *zoche* to this). What can you do to improve? You are already learning Torah all day, but you need to put more of your will into it, and to increase your desire for learning Torah, and to do it all with *simchah* (joy)! How much does one really want to learn Torah and how happy is a person when he learns Torah? That is where we come to the inner point of our *avodah*.

When we learn Torah all day, is this the same as learning other subjects all day? Is it the same as learning math all day? Is it because one is a *mitzvah* and the other is not a *mitzvah*? Is that the entire difference...? Is it because one is holy and the other is mundane? Is there no other difference?

The Ramchal in *Derech Eretz Chaim* explains something fundamental. A Torah thought is like a coal, and more you think of it, the more you ignite it. Other wisdoms do not have any growth. You gain the knowledge and that's it. But with Torah, you can take a Torah thought and keep expanding it further and uncovering more depth to it. Each of us has had the Torah within us ever since we were a fetus in the womb. The Torah is already within us, so every time we are learning Torah, we are really revealing outward that which is already inside of us!

With this perspective, one has the genuine level of Torah learning. This opens one's heart as he learns Torah: When one realizes that the Torah which he is learning now was already inside of him, and he has now revealed it outward. A true Torah scholar is therefore not merely a person who learns a lot of Torah, knows a lot of Torah, and remembers a lot of Torah. That is just scratching the surface. In addition to learning, reviewing and remembering one's learning, a true Torah scholar realizes that the Torah was always inside him and it was always with him, and he is aware that his learning is activating the Torah that is already within him.

Thus, when we learn Torah, we must realize that it is not like learning other wisdoms. We are already connected to it deep in our souls. Our entire exertion in Torah is to just so that we can activate all of the Torah that is already dormant within us! There is a huge treasury of Torah within all of us. The

Torah is not just found on the *sefarim* shelves, it is found deep within us, deep in our *neshamah*! It is just covered over and not revealed. How do we reveal it outward? By learning, reviewing, and putting our heart and will and desire into learning Torah. With exertion in Torah and a desire for Torah together, our heart becomes opened as we learn Torah and this enables to have true understanding in Torah.

Thus, the difference between the Jewish people and the Nations, and the difference between the Torah's wisdom and all other bodies of knowledge and wisdom, is that the Torah's wisdom is already contained deep in a Jew's soul, and it is upon us to reveal it outwardly. This is the kind of Torah which brings a person to all levels of greatness, as the Sage Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair taught and as explained in *sefer Mesillas Yesharim* – it is when one recognizes that his soul is really attached with the Torah on an intrinsic level.

### *In Conclusion*

We need to understand that if we really want to merit a good year this year, we need to reach the root of our life's work on this world. On one hand, each person should increase his exertion in Torah on his own level, but even more so, we should be yearning to keep increasing our Torah learning, to yearn for more and more Torah – and, primarily, to really put our hearts into our Torah learning.

When we merit, with *siyata d'shmaya*, to truly give our hearts into our Torah learning, along with actual exertion in Torah learning, our hearts will become opened to the Torah, and then we will gain true understanding in Torah. We will understand our learning on a whole deeper level, with genuine understanding.

The Torah is the greatest thing in Creation and it is hidden deep within each of us. When one truly absorbs this concept, it can change his entire life. It is not enough to hear about this - it needs to be absorbed in the depths of our heart.

May we merit to recognize and reveal the awesome potential and treasure that is within us! The more one learns Torah with his heart connected to it, with a true desire for more and more Torah, one will have a more elevated experience of these days leading up to Rosh HaShanah. May we merit to bind our souls with Hashem, to willingly accept His kingship upon us, to yearn for more Torah and to increase our Torah learning, and from the light of Torah which comes from Hashem's light, may we all merit to be written and sealed for a good year.

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