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[Home](#) > Rosh HaShanah - 0001 Joy on Rosh Hashanah

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Awe and Joy on the Day of Judgment

Rosh HaShanah is the *Yom HaDin* (the day of judgment). Is there any heart that does not tremble from it? Just as a person is afraid when he stands in court, so is Rosh HaShanah a time of trepidation, where we stand before the King of all kings. There is a natural fear that all people have of the judgment of Rosh HaShanah, each person on his own level.

But on the other hand, Rosh HaShanah is also described as a joyous time. It is written, *"Eat from the fattest foods and drink sweet beverages...and do not be sad, for the joy of Hashem is their splendor."*^[1] There is a *mitzvah* to eat, drink, and be joyous, on Rosh HaShanah. Some opinions even forbid fasting on Rosh HaShanah, because it is a time of joy.

What is the joy that takes place on Rosh HaShanah? The fear of Rosh HaShanah we are all familiar with. We know it is the time where people are judged, where life and death is decided; naturally there is a fear on this day. But it is hard to understand why Rosh HaShanah is also a joyous time. What is this happiness all about?

Joy: When Sin Is Removed

It is well-known that the Arizal said that he mainly reached his high levels of comprehension through *simcha* (joy). Let us think into this.

The simple-known reason of the Arizal's success is because he intensely desired the Torah and he was aware of its value. It is certainly true that he valued the Torah very much, and that he appreciated holiness. The Arizal found joy in the Torah, before he became the Arizal. Now that we have his writings, it became easier for us to find joy in the Torah, but the Arizal found joy in the Torah way before he composed his writings, through his exertion in Torah and in doing the *mitzvos*. The joy he had from Torah and *mitzvos* enabled him to reach all of his great revelations.

This is the simple understanding of how the Arizal found his great joy. There is also a deeper reason, though.

It is written, *"G-d created man upright, but they seek many calculations."*^[2] Originally, man was *yoshor* (upright), and after Adam's sin, man fell from the state of *yoshor* into the state of seeking "many calculations": all kinds of rationalizations that lead to sin.

Why does man become sad? The word for “sadness” in Hebrew is “*etzev*”, from the word *atzavim*, “images”, a term for idol worship. Had Adam HaRishon never sinned, no one else who came after him would have been enabled to sin; there would be no sins in the world. There would be no idol worship in the world; every sin is a degree of idol worship. If we would live in a world in which there is no sin, there would be no sadness.

Sadness happens because the soul deep down is in pain that it has sinned. It is pained that it has become distanced from her Creator. (This is at the root of the matter. When we analyze the branch of the matter, it is because the body enables sadness, for the body is created from the element of earth, which is the root of sadness).

When a person is found living with Hashem, there is “*Splendor and joy in His place.*”^[3] There is no place for sadness in Hashem’s abode. “One cannot come to the king in sackcloth” – this is not just because it is a dishonor to the king to come in sackcloth, but because the palace of the king is a place of joy, and sackcloth is a connotation of pain and sadness, the antithesis of joy.

A person can only be sad when he becomes distanced from the Creator. When a person sins, this causes “*timtum halev*” (blockage of the heart); there is distance between man and his Creator, and then there is sadness.

It seems to a person that he is sad because he has financial issues, or because he has a problem when it comes to raising his children or a problem with *shidduchim*. But the deep reason of why sadness appears is because of a person’s sins. The sins create a distance between the person and Hashem. A person’s sins might make their appearance in the form of problems with children or with *shidduchim*, but those things are just the garments that are covering over the real issue. Those problems are not the root of the sadness.

The true joy that a person can know of in his life is: to reach a situation in which he is cleansed from sin. This is when one purifies himself from sins, through doing true *teshuvah*. The Rambam says that the *teshuvah* must be on the level in which Hashem testifies on the person that he would never commit the sin again.^[4] When one does genuine *teshuvah*, he becomes happy.

Of Motzei Yom Kippur, it is said, “*Go eat your bread happily...for G-d is already satisfied with your deeds.*” When one’s sins have become erased, he can then go eat his bread happily. The joy is not simply because his sins have been forgiven; that is also a reason to rejoice, but the depth of the joy is because it is sin that causes sadness, and now that the sins have been removed, there is no place for sadness in the person. When sins are removed, a person naturally finds himself happy, for the soul is connected to the Creator, and this is a natural joy of the soul, where it delights in its very bond with the Almighty.

The Arizal was thus joyous when he learned Torah, because he purified himself from any sins, so that he would be able to learn Torah with proper fervor and awe; together with his exertion in learning. This brought him to joy, and from this joy, he reached awesome levels of comprehension.

Joy comes from returning to our pure state, where we are cleansed from sin. When a person tries to get his happiness from external factors, it can only be temporary happiness, and it is minimal. True joy is only when a person removes from himself the reason that is responsible for all sadness in the soul – sin.

The Joy on Rosh HaShanah - Passing Before The King

This also helps us understand the joy that is present on Rosh HaShanah. Although Rosh HaShanah is the *Yom HaDin*, it is also a day of *simcha* (joy). The reason to be happy on Rosh HaShanah is because

it is the day where "All in the world pass before Him, like sheep of a flock." It is one day of the year where each person is granted a 'ticket' to enter before Him.

Throughout the rest of the year, only *tzaddikim* have access to Hashem's palace that is opened to them. (They feel Hashem simply at all times. This is the meaning of the 36 *tzaddikim* who greet the *Shechinah* each day - to receive the *Shechinah* is to palpably sense Hashem). A regular person cannot enter into that 'place' during the rest of the year. But there is one day a year where all people are given the right to enter before the King of the world: Rosh HaShanah. On this day, there is no one who cannot come before the King of all Kings. When one merits to be with the King of all Kings and to be close to Him, he is filled with joy.

The joy on Rosh HaShanah is thus not to be happy over the fact that it is *Yom HaDin* (although from a deeper perspective, there is also a concept of having joy in the concept of the *Yom HaDin*; but we won't discuss this). The *Yom HaDin* evokes fear, not joy. Which part of Rosh HaShanah evokes joy? The fact that it is a day of great closeness with Hashem. When a person is close to Hashem - there is "*Splendor and joy in His place.*"

Thus, the reason to be joyous on Rosh HaShanah is, because a person is passing before the King of the world.

Preparing For Rosh HaShanah With Both Fear and Joy

If a person never thinks on Rosh HaShanah that it is the day where we are guaranteed to pass in such close proximity before Hashem, he is missing the joy of this day. One must therefore prepare before Rosh HaShanah, on two different levels. Firstly, one must reflect on how it is the *yom hadin*, where all people will be judged for every single action; the more a person has purified his heart, the more he will have a sense of fear. Secondly, one must realize that it is the day where we declare Hashem as king - and all people are granted the right to enter before Him.

Hashem is scrutinizing each person on Rosh HaShanah, and there is no one who goes unnoticed. The simple understanding of this is that it refers to the judgment. But the deeper meaning of it is that Hashem counts each person lovingly, like a father who loves to see his children, like a king who enjoys seeing his people. There is a desire from Hashem, so to speak, to see each of His children, and that is why each person is scrutinized before Him.

There is no day where we are so guaranteed to feel close to Hashem as on Rosh HaShanah! If a person only prepared for Rosh HaShanah with a sense of dread of the *Yom HaDin*, but he is not aware of the joy of this day, he might merit a good judgment, but he will be missing the point of this day: the fact that Hashem is more fully revealed, in the minds and hearts, of all of us.

Crying On Rosh HaShanah

Of the ten days of repentance, it is written, "*Seek Hashem where He is found, call out to Him where He is close.*"^[5] This begins on Rosh HaShanah. How does it begin? What does it look like? The time that a person enters before the Creator is where the closeness begins. It is the root of all closeness to Hashem of the rest of the year.

In the writings of the Arizal, it is brought that if a person suddenly finds his eyes brimming with tears on Rosh HaShanah (and thereafter), it is a sign that he is being judged at that moment. (This is only true if it comes suddenly, and not if a person is crying because of the words he is saying in davening or from any of the singing and humming.) Why indeed does the person start crying at that time when he is being judged? Simply speaking, it is because the soul fears the judgment. When there is fear, there is crying. But from a deeper perspective, this cannot be the reason. When a person is very

afraid, he feels so paralyzed that can't even cry. If someone encounters a lion, he does not cry. He becomes paralyzed out of fear, to the point that he cannot even feel anything.

Once someone asked the Kotzker zt"l to explain to him what *yiras Hashem* (fear of G-d) is. The Kotzker asked him, "Did you ever encounter a lion?" The person answered, "Yes." The Kotzker asked him, "And what was going through your mind?" The person said, "I stood there like a stone. I couldn't even think straight because I was so frozen."

Yiras Hashem is when a person reaches a situation where he is so nullified to Hashem that he doesn't feel a thing. We are used to thinking that *Yiras Hashem* means simply "fear". It is true that it is fear, but that is only one step in *Yiras Hashem*. The last step of *Yiras Hashem* is for a person to feel nothing else other than the reality of Hashem.

When there is crying on Rosh HaShanah because it is the *Yom HaDin*, it can be stemming from fear, but it can also be stemming from the feeling of standing before the King of all Kings, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Even more so, sensing the reality of Hashem can cause a person to cry, when one who has yearnings to sense Him.

The Joy of Being Close To Hashem - Only For One Who Wants It

In order for a person to feel the joy on Rosh HaShanah of being close with Hashem, one needs to lead a lifestyle in which he is searching for closeness with Hashem. This is because a person can only become happy upon filling the void he knows he must fill. You can only appreciate something when you realize how much you lacked it.

To illustrate, if you give a person a new printer right after his old printer broke, he will be very happy. He realized he was missing a printer and he appreciates the new printer. But if you give someone a printer and he has no need for it, he has no idea what to do with it, and perhaps he will look to sell it, and it is a bother to him.

If a person is not looking to be closer to Hashem before Rosh HaShanah, he will have a hard time being happy on Rosh HaShanah with the fact that it is a day where we are closer to Hashem. He has never longed for this closeness, so he has no interest in it; why should he be happy?

The Arizal said that if a person does not cry on Rosh HaShanah, it is a sign that his soul is in need of rectification. If someone doesn't cry, it shows that he is not looking to become closer to Hashem. If he would be looking to be close to Hashem, he would become seized with emotion as soon as he realizes that it is the *Yom HaDin*, for he would realize that he is standing before Hashem, and he would begin to cry from this. If he does not cry, it must be a sign that he is not awaiting the closeness.

When parents marry off their child and they escort the child to the chuppah, they cry tears of emotion. They raised this child for 20 years, and now they are bringing him to the chuppah; they cry from this. But if a father walks his child to the chuppah and he shows no signs of emotion, perhaps it is because there is not a good relationship between the father and son. If they have a normal relationship, surely there is joy when the father walks him down.

In order for a person to be joyous on Rosh HaShanah, he must await for the closeness with Hashem already from before this day.

Why, indeed, is this the joy of Rosh HaShanah? Why is it specifically Rosh HaShanah that this joy is present? It is because man was created on Rosh HaShanah. Man remained upright until he sinned. On Rosh HaShanah, the original light that was present on the first day of Creation returns. It is the original light where man was "*yoshev*". If a person throughout the year is seeking to return to being

yoshor, when it comes Rosh HaShanah and the light of *yoshor* is shining, he is joyous from this, because a man who is *yoshor* is connected to the Creator. But if one is not searching for this, he has nothing to be joyous about on Rosh HaShanah.

Inspiration Is Not Enough To Become Close To Hashem

Now we will try to make the matters here more practical.

Naturally, when it comes the days of *Selichos* and the ten days of teshuvah, every person wants to be inspired, to grow higher, and become closer to Hashem. But how *do* we become closer to Hashem?

Is it through hearing an inspiring *mussar shmuess* from a certain speaker?

Compare this to the following. A person wants to get up in the morning on time, so he sets his alarm. He hears the alarm ringing the next morning. As he's asleep, he smashes down the button of the alarm clock and continues to sleep. The alarm rings a few minutes later, and he turns it off again. A person might "get up" from sleeping, but he's still half-asleep, and sometimes even after waking up he falls totally back asleep. A person might get awakened, but soon, after he is sleeping again.

If a person really wants to "get up" and not fall back asleep again, the first thing he must do when he gets up is: To jump out of the bed! If he remains lying in bed, who knows when he will get up.

The lesson from this is that that when it comes Yomim Noraim and we are inspired because of the coming *Yom HaDin*, it will not be enough if we receive inspiration. Hearing a *mussar shmuess* is like hearing the alarm clock in the morning only to go back to sleep afterwards. It might inspire a person for two days, and in the best case, it lasts until after Rosh HaShanah. Often by the time the person it is the next *davening*, the inspiration is already gone.

If we want inspiration to last, we all know that hearing a half-hour *mussar shmuess* will not do it. A *mussar shmuess* at best can help that people shouldn't live entirely in a spiritual slumber for their entire life. But in order to have real and lasting inspiration on an ongoing basis, one needs to build for himself a kind of life in which he is seeking closeness to Hashem, throughout the course of the year.

There Are No Shortcuts

When the convert came before the sage Shamai and he asked to be taught the entire Torah on one foot, he was pushed away. Imagine if we would ask Shamai to give a *mussar shmuess* to us - I think he would also push everyone away. Why? Because he would know that it is pointless. What can you say already in a half hour? Can you change a person in a half hour?

If a person wants to know *halachah*, then perhaps learning the *halachah* for a half hour can be enough. But can a person finish the entire tractate of Gemara he is learning, by setting aside a half hour for it? Would he ask anyone to teach him the entire tractate in a half hour? I do not know of anyone who would give such a *shiur*. Maybe he would hope that they ask him to continue the *shiur* after a half hour, but nobody learns an entire tractate in a half hour.

The avodah of a person on this earth is like a "tractate" that lasts for 70 years of our life. What then is the point of a *mussar shmuess* that lasts for a half hour? I am not poking fun *chas v'shalom* at a half-hour *mussar shmuess*. It is learning Torah, and it certainly causes some awakening in a person. But when compared to how much we need to do on this world, it is almost nothing.

People want to come to hear an inspiring lecture, they want to grow from it and change from it. *Klal Yisrael* wants to become closer to their Father in heaven. But it is not possible to actually change from

hearing a speech and in such a short amount of time.

Therefore, I did not come here to give you tips on how to merit a good judgment. There is no such advice. Anyone who thinks he can hear in two minutes of advice like this is mistaken, because life is a lot deeper than what it appears to be.

The 'advice' to merit a good judgment is: From the beginning of the year, until the end of the year, work on becoming closer to Hashem.

It is well-known that the Noam Elimelech promised that whoever will come pray by his grave will merit that he will not die without doing *teshuvah*. I met a person once who was about to go to the grave of the Noam Elimelech. I said to him: "I can give you a similar guarantee, but on one condition." He asked me, "And what is the condition?" I said to him, "I do not have the power of the Noam Elimelech. I can just guarantee you that if you do *teshuvah* every day, you will die after having done *teshuvah*!"

People like to search for the "easy road" in things. A person naturally does not feel the strength to do *teshuvah* every day, so he looks for some "*segulah*" that will do the trick. He will go to the grave of a *tzaddik* where there is some guarantee, and after that, he will continue to do as he pleases - and the Noam Elimelech surely didn't include in his guarantee that if someone simply does whatever he pleases that he will merit to die after doing *teshuvah*.

If a person has tried his best yet he has still encountered failure, it is then that going to the grave of a *tzaddik* can help him. But there is no easy road in life; there are no shortcuts.

It comes Erev Rosh HaShanah and people want advice to merit a good judgment and to be found meritorious in the *Yom HaDin*. But we must understand that the *Yom HaDin* is an issue of all of our life on this world, and there are no shortcuts to take in order to get by it. In all areas of life, we must know that there are no shortcuts or easy roads. To build for ourselves a true life, an entire lifetime is required.

In Conclusion

It is my hope that you have taken out one single point from all of these words [be prepared to work hard]. If a person loses his job, either he can give up and fall into a depression and take to his bed all day, or he can get up and find himself a new job, where he will work again. The only point that is to be gleaned from the words of this speech is: that you try to seek out a path for the rest of the year, from beginning until end. It should be a path that leads you to palpable closeness with Hashem, the closeness that is rooted in Rosh HaShanah.

Hashem should help each person find the true path that will build him, from beginning until the end of the year, and that all of us should merit to be written and sealed for a good year.

[1] Nechemiah 8:10

[2] Koheles 7:29

[3] Divrei HaYomim I: 16:27

[4] Rambam, *Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:2

[5] Yeshayahu 55:6

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