

The Weekly Farbrengen



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EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

ROSH HASHANA

SOUNDING THE SHOFAR

The Baal Shem Tov explained the effect of the *shofar* by the following *meshal*: A king once decided to send his only son to a faraway land in order to benefit by broadening his experience. The prince set out from the royal palace loaded with gold and silver, but he frittered it all on the way to his distant destination and arrived there penniless. The local people, who had never heard of his father the king, laughed off his claims. Was this a prince?! Unable to bear the suffering any longer, the son decided to make the long trek homeward.

He finally arrived in his homeland, but he had been away for so long that he had even forgotten the local language. The poor tattered fellow tried motioning to the people around him that he was the son of their mighty king, but they mocked him and beat him.

Arriving at the palace gates, the son tried again but was ignored until, in utter despair, he cried aloud so that his father would hear him. The king recognized his son's voice, his love was aroused for him, and he came out to welcome him home.

Similarly, the King, Hashem, sends a *neshama*, his prince, down to this world to benefit by observing the Torah and fulfilling its *mitzvos*. However, when hankering after pleasures, the *neshama* loses all its wealth and arrives at a place where his Father, Hashem, is unknown. Moreover, the *neshama* forgets how things were Above, and in the long galus, even forgets its own 'language'. In desperation, it cries out by sounding the *shofar*, expressing regret for the past and determination for the future. This simple cry arouses Hashem's mercy: He shows His love for His only son and forgives him.

(כתר שם טוב, הוסיפות קצ"ד [בחדש])

Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev would tell the following *meshal*: A king once lost his way in the forest, until he met a man who directed him out of the forest and back to his palace. He rewarded the stranger richly and appointed him as a senior minister. Years later, that minister acted rebelliously and was sentenced to death, but the king granted him one last wish. The minister asked that both he and the king put on the clothing they had worn long ago, when he had rescued the king from the forest. This reminded the king of his indebtedness to this man, and he revoked the sentence.

Similarly, we willingly accepted the Torah from the King, Hashem, when all the other nations refused the offer. But since that time, like the minister, we have

been rebellious by doing *aveiros*, and are therefore fearful on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment. So we sound the *shofar* to remind Hashem of Mattan Torah, when we accepted the Torah and made Hashem our king, and we express our renewed eagerness to crown Him once again. This *zechus* stands by us: Hashem forgives our *aveiros* and inscribes us immediately for a good life.

(המשך וככה תרל"ז פרק ע')

Before Rosh Hashana תר"מ (1879) the Rebbe Maharash requested his *meshareis* to relay the following to the chassidim: "It is written that sounding the *shofar* is like the cry, 'Father, Father.' The main thing there is the cry."

That Rosh Hashanah, the entire village wept with remorse.

(סה"ש תש"ד ע' 4)

CONSIDER

What is the difference between our connection to HaShem expressed in the two *meshalim*? Why did the Chassidim prefer to hear a *maamar*? What did the Rebbe explain to them?

The Baal Shem Tov would usually be present for *tekias shofar* together with his *talmidim*. One year he requested one of them, the *tzaddik* Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polonnoye, to take his place there, while the Baal Shem Tov himself sounded the *shofar* with the simple folk and the children. Those unsophisticated people cried out to Hashem, "Father in Heaven, have *rachmanus*!" And that had the greatest effect of all.

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 6)

DAVENING WITH FERVOR

On Rosh Hashana the Rebbeim would *daven* with much fervor and tears, particularly the first *maariv* which would extend for many hours. The Rebbe spoke of how every individual should take a lesson to some extent from the exceptional *davening* of the Rebbeim.

(סה"ש תשנ"ב ע' 13, הע' 19)

In the year תרמ"ז (1885), the Rebbe Rashab was in Yalta, Crimea, and *davened* in a little *shul* of Poilishe chassidim. On the night of Rosh Hashanah, he remained there to *daven* after everyone had left. The *shamash*, before going home, ordered the *goy* who cleaned the *shul* not to extinguish the light or lock the door. When the *shamash* finished his *seuda*, he felt guilty that he had left a *Yid*, a *talmid chochom*, alone in *shul*, so he returned to see what was happening. Upon arriving, he saw the *goy* standing in the foyer and crying bitterly.

The *goy* explained, "I'm used to hearing people praying with joyful songs – but here stood a man who was pouring out his soul. So how could I hold back from crying? I remembered all my problems: my uncle died, my cow died, my aged mother is sick, and I wanted to cry."

And when the *shamash* entered the *shul* itself and his eyes beheld the Rebbe Rashab *davening*, they too became fountains of tears.

(ספר המאמרים תשי"א ע' 90)

ACCEPTING HASHEM'S KINGSHIP

The activities of a person on Rosh Hashana impact his entire year, since Rosh Hashana is the head of the year. Therefore one should use one's time wisely on Rosh Hashana.

(שו"ע אדה"ז סי' תקפ"ג ע"ח)

The Friediker Rebbe writes: The main *avoda* of Rosh Hashanah is to accept *ol malchus shomayim*, the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, even for chassidim of stature, the *avoda* would be to simply say *Tehillim*, to sleep as little as possible, and to take care not to indulge in idle talk. In this they are like a servant whose service to his master leaves him not even one free moment, or like a son preoccupied with the joy of welcoming his father whom he has not seen for a whole year.

(אג"ק אדמו"ר הרי"צ, ח"י ע' 425)

One Rosh Hashanah, the sons of the *Tzemach Tzedek* and some other prominent chassidim asked him to deliver an additional *maamar* for them. He answered, "The people at large are saying *Tehillim*, and you are requesting *Chassidus*?! It is better to say *Tehillim*."

The *Tzemach Tzedek* himself was seen saying *Tehillim* throughout the second night, his eyes flowing with tears. Even as he waited to say the *maamar* on the second day of *Yom-Tov*, he murmured words of *Tehillim*.

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 10)

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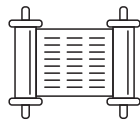
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ALMONDS ON ROSH HASHANA

Which nuts do we avoid on Rosh Hashana?

As we begin the year anew on Rosh Hashana, we are careful with various things that may signify the tone for the new year. With regards to food in particular, it is customary to eat fatty meat and sweet foods as a sign that the year should be one of sweetness and plenty.¹

The Alter Rebbe quotes the custom not to cook with vinegar for Rosh Hashana because it is sour.² Based on this, we avoid vinegar as an ingredient if its taste will be felt, as well as pickles. Likewise, one should make sure the new fruit for *kidush* is ripe and not sour.³ Some don't eat lemons, but one may use lemon juice to dress a salad since it doesn't give a sour taste to the salad and only enhances its taste.⁴ While some have a custom to refrain from eating spicy or sharp foods, many do eat them because "sharpness" can be advantageous, and there is no specific Chabad custom regarding this.

Shulchan Aruch quotes a custom not to eat walnuts on Rosh Hashana. *Poskim* offer two reasons: Firstly, the Hebrew word for walnut (*egoz*) has the same numerical value as sin (*chet*), and secondly, nuts generate phlegm and mucus that could interfere with one's davening.⁵ While the first reason applies specifically to walnuts, the second extends more broadly. The Alter Rebbe quotes the second reason and writes that people are therefore particular not to eat hazelnuts (*luzim*) as well, even though they have a different name and a different *gematria*.⁶

Contemporary halachic authorities discuss the status of other types of nuts (e.g. almonds and peanuts). Perhaps because they have a different texture they were never part of the custom, or they too might generate mucous. In practice, one may eat them as part of a dish or salad.

Crushed nuts (e.g. in a cake) don't generate phlegm and would therefore not be problematic. Following strictly the second reason, even crushed walnuts would be acceptable,⁷ but other types of crushed nuts would be permissible according to all opinions.⁸

Incidentally, some have a custom not to eat grapes on Rosh Hashana because the Eitz Hada'as was a grape vine according to many opinions, yet the prevalent custom is that it is permitted.⁹

1. רמ"א אור"ח סי' תקפ"ג ס"א, שו"ע ר' שם ס"ד.
2. מג"א ריש סי' תקפ"ג, שו"ע ר' שם ס"ב.
3. ע"פ משנ"ב סי' ת"ר סק"ד.
4. ערוה"ש סי' תקפ"ג ס"ג.
5. רמ"א סי' תקפ"ג ס"ב (מביא שני הטעמים).
6. שו"ע ר' סי' תקפ"ג ס"ו.
7. ובשו"ת באר משה ח"ג סי' ס"ז.
8. מים כהלכה סי' צ"ג.
9. ראה פסק"ת סי' תקפ"ג ק"ז והע' 45.

לע"ג מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה



REBBETZIN MENUCHA ROCHEL

Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel, the daughter of the Mittlerer Rebbe, was born on Yud-Tes Kislev תקנ"ט (1798), on the actual day that the Alter Rebbe was freed from prison. She married R. Yaakov Kuli Slonim and later moved to Chevron in Eretz Yisroel. She was a saintly woman to whom many *mofsim* are attributed, and many people came to her home to seek her blessing and advice. She passed away on the 24th of Shvat תרמ"ח (1888) and is buried in Chevron.

While preparing to travel to Eretz Yisroel, Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel went to the Tzemach Tzedek and expressed her fear of travel, being that it was then winter and she would perhaps fall sick from the rain. The Rebbe replied, "Worry not! You will travel between the raindrops!" For the rest of her life, not a drop of rain ever fell on her!

Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel attributed great importance to cleanliness and purity; the word "purity" was the word most often carried on her lips. There was never a stain seen on her clothing. Even in her later years, when she was quite old and bedridden, she maintained a pristine presence.

This was also the way she educated her children and descendants; whenever she met them she would bring this important virtue to the forefront of their minds.

She would say in the name of her father the Mittlerer Rebbe and her grandfather the Alter Rebbe that "where there is cleanliness and purity, there is *kashrus* and *Yiddishkeit*."

(עטרת מלכות עמ' 255)

There was a group of bandits in Chevron called "The Black Hand" who would break into Jewish homes, robbing and plundering, cursing and threatening all the while. They wreaked havoc until one day the group leader's wife was having difficulty giving birth and both she and the baby were in grave danger. Having no other choice, the chief bandit sent a message to the home of Rebbetzin Menucha Rochel pleading for a blessing. She returned with a message that if he would cease his wicked activities against the *Yidden*, everything would be alright. The *goy* swore that he would stop and hurried home, where he thankfully found out that his wife had given birth. The *Yidden* of Chevron were thus able to live without fear.

A Moment with The Rebbe



GEORGIAN JEWRY

Simchas Torah 5727 (1966). At the *farbrengen*, the Rebbe told Reb Shmuel Levitin that in the next year *Yidden* from Georgian land in the USSR will be present. Reb Shmuel, who for many years had served there as a *rov*, was euphoric.

The revered Michalashvilli family was released from behind the Iron Curtain that summer; the promise was realized.

When they came to the Rebbe for Rosh Hashanah 5728, the Rebbe sent *mashke* to

Reb Shmuel to *farbreng* with them, and they indeed danced through the night.

At the Rebbe's Rosh Hashanah *farbrengen*, just after delivering the *maamar* beginning with the *possuk* "Ve'hoyo bayom hahu" [And on that day a great shofar will be blown], the Rebbe turned to Reb Shmuel with a glowing countenance, "Nu, the *Gruzinisher Yidden* came?"

(Otzar Hachassidim NY, page 260)

