

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn



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THE DEPTH OF CORONATION

The *possuk* says: “*Dirshu Hashem be’himatzo*, seek Hashem when He is available.” When is the time of year when Hashem is especially available? The Gemara identifies this as referring to the “ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.”

The obvious problem with this statement is that there are only *seven* days dividing Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, not ten!

The answer is that Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur each have a distinctive quality, aside from what they have in common with the rest of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. In addition to being a day of *teshuvah*, Rosh Hashanah is when we crown Hashem as our king. We thus begin with the unique aspect of Rosh Hashanah, continue with the ten days of repentance (including Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as they are part of these ten days), and then conclude with the unique aspect of Yom Kippur (as explained elsewhere). This is the meaning of the Gemara’s statement, “ten days *between* Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur”: there are ten days of repentance that lie between the unique aspects of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

WHY THE SHOFAR?

The chief feature and *mitzvah* of Rosh Hashanah is the blowing of the shofar.

The Rambam explains that the shofar embodies a wake-up call for repentance, to arouse us from our slumber in the futile pleasures of the world and inspire us to return to Hashem. However, when Rav Saadia Gaon enumerates ten aspects of the shofar, the first idea he states is that blowing the shofar signifies the coronation of Hashem as our king (just as trumpets would be sounded when crowning a physical king). The fact that he puts this idea first demonstrates that this is the foremost element of the shofar.

What is the inner significance of crowning Hashem as our king on Rosh Hashanah, and how does this differ from the concept of *teshuvah*?

REACHING INSIDE

There are three dimensions in the conduct of a Jew and his relationship with Hashem.

The regular conduct of a Jew consists of following the path of Torah and *mitzvos* and being a good Jew.

However, it may happen that a Jew fails to behave properly (each person according to their level). When this occurs, a second dimension comes to play—the concept of *teshuvah*.

Why is it that a Jew does *teshuvah*? If he is on a low level, as evidenced by the fact that he sinned, why does his negative behavior bother him? The reason is because deep down every Jew desires to fulfill Hashem’s Will, and the only reason he might sin is because the *yetzer hara* gets in the way (as the Rambam explains). When this inner feeling comes to the fore, his misconduct troubles him and he does *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* thus taps into something deeper than what is ordinarily present in regular *mitzvah* observance.

THE INNER FLINT STONE

The Alter Rebbe gives a *meshal* to explain this idea. For ordinary fire to burn, two conditions are necessary: the presence of fuel (such as oil or tinder), and the absence of adverse conditions like water. But there is a second type of fire—hidden “fire” latent within a flint stone (*tzur* in Hebrew). This type of fire does not require any conditions to burn. Even if the stone was submerged in water for decades, a spark will emerge when it is struck.

Regular fire represents our open connection to Hashem. To “fuel” this connection, we must live a lifestyle of Torah and *mitzvos*, and we must certainly avoid *aveiros*, which will damage this connection. However, we possess another type of “fire” as well—a bond to Hashem found deep within our hearts. This “fire” remains whole regardless of outside behavior, and it merely needs to be revealed.

After the sin of the *eigel hazahav*, when Moshe appealed to Hashem to forgive the Jews for their

sin, Hashem replied that He would place Moshe “in the crevice of the *tzur*.” The Alter Rebbe explains that “*tzur*” refers to this inner bond, which exists both on our part and on the part of Hashem. Through revealing this higher, deeper connection both Above and within Bnei Yisroel, they are inspired to do *teshuvah*, resulting in atonement for a sin as grave as the *eigel*.

The Aseres Yemei Teshuvah are a time when we can more easily tap into the power of *tzur* and do *teshuvah*. Although *teshuvah* can be done throughout the year, during these ten days it is easier to attain, and the *teshuvah* achieved is much deeper as well.

KING FIRST, TESHUVAH SECOND

However, there is yet a third dimension.

An example can be given from a physical king. Under normal circumstances, the king's subjects submit to him and follow his orders. If it so happens that someone breaks the rules, his inner desire to obey the king propels him to feel remorse and mend his ways.

However, the concept of feeling guilty and repenting can only exist if the king is already king. If he has yet to be crowned as king, the notion of obeying or disobeying isn't relevant.

Thus, the prerequisite of *teshuvah* is crowning Hashem as king, the concept of *kabolas ol malchus shomayim*. The Rambam can speak of shofar as arousing us to do *teshuvah* only after Hashem is our king, whereupon we are regarded as Hashem's children and as His servants. A son must obey his father, and a servant must obey his master, and if they don't, they will do *teshuvah*. But before all that can happen, we must coronate Hashem and submit to His authority. This is the first element of shofar, preceding the concept of *teshuvah*.

WE NEED A KING!

Moreover, this dimension is higher and deeper than *teshuvah*.

Once a Jew has already accepted Hashem as his king, we can understand that even if he sins, this recognition remains, motivating him to do *teshuvah*. However, if he is in a position where Hashem has not yet been crowned as king, what's wrong with the way things are? What is pushing him to change the status quo?

The reason is because we have a connection to Hashem that is even deeper than *teshuvah*. The latter dimension can be expressed in some way—namely, through *teshuvah*. But then there is an intrinsic connection where a Jew cannot live without Hashem as His king; he is impelled to crown Hashem as his ultimate authority.

In fact, Hashem feels the same, and He implores of us that we coronate him. He is bothered, as it were, by the fact that the king-

servant relationship between Him and Bnei Yisroel has not yet materialized.

Expounding the *possuk* concerning the two *chatzotzros*, the Maggid of Mezeritch explains that *chatzotzros* can be interpreted as *chatzi tzuros*, two halves of a coin. We and Hashem are each half, and we can only be complete when attached with the other. Therefore, Hashem begs us to crown Him, and we beseech Him to become our king.

This, then, is the unique aspect of Rosh Hashanah, which precedes the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah (of which Rosh Hashanah itself is also a part).

POWER OF THE HEAD

Rosh Hashanah is called the *head (rosh)* of the year (and not the *beginning* of the year). The Rebbe explains that the head includes three elements: It is an exceptional part of the body in its own right; it contains the energy of the entire body; and moreover, it actually directs the body.

Likewise, Rosh Hashanah includes three elements. First of all, it is the day of Hashem's coronation. This does not consist of a *practical* resolve, rather of a realization that Hashem is our king and that we are His servants (similar to how the head is unique on its own). This is followed by Rosh Hashanah as it is a day of *teshuvah*, which is higher than the *avodah* of Torah and *mitzvos* (just as the head includes the energy of the body). Finally, *kabolas ol* and *teshuvah* must lead to practical *hachlatos* throughout the year in avoiding bad and doing good (just as the head actually directs the body).

Likewise, Hashem will surely give us a sweet new year, not just in theory but in actuality, with revealed and open good!

For further learning see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 4, pp. 1144ff.

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