

# חזון בני

א' - ב' תשרי תשפ"ג

פ' נצבים - ראש השנה



## דברי פתיחה

## מלכיות

It was a balmy Summer's day in 1939 in London. Sammy was a young refugee, separated from his family, one of the Kindertransport children who had been rescued prior to the outbreak of World War II.

There was much excitement in the orphanage where he was living as they were about to meet none other than King George VI! The boys scrubbed their faces and knees, cleaned their clothing and waited with excited anticipation for the next day. The following morning, the boys all lined the sides of the streets as the royal procession slowly drove by. Sammy realised that they weren't going to actually meet the King after all; all they would get to see would be the royal procession. To the astonishment of all those around him, Sammy broke ranks, ran down the street and pounded on the door of King's royal car!

The car came to a stop. The King opened his door and asked the young boy how he could help. In faltering English, Sammy blurted out, "Your Majesty, thank you very much for bringing me to your country. I am however very lonely as my parents are still stuck in Germany." The King softly asked Sammy for his name, his parents' name, and where he was from. Then he left.

A week later, Sammy was called into the headmaster's office. He was sure that he would be reprimanded for his antics but instead the headmaster informed him that the King had been greatly impressed by him and had even sent him a present. He opened the door and in walked Sammy's parents, having been personally saved by King George VI. Years later, one of Sammy's friends tearfully recounted the story and said, "if only I had had the guts to do what Sammy did. My parents may still be alive."

We are in the midst of ימי רצון, a time when 'המלך' the King is in the field, and we can connect, pour our hearts out and beseech Him for anything that we need. We just need to grasp the opportunity and pound on the King's door and make that request. As חז"ל say, 'דרשו ה' בהמצאו', referring to the עשרת ה' for this is the time when the King of Kings wants that connection more than ever.

This year more than any other, מלכות is in the headlines and the fact that Her Majesty the Queen's passing took place in the lead-up to ראש השנה should not be lost on us. If ראש השנה is about one thing, it is מלכות! In fact, we are taught that earthly מלכות reflects Heavenly מלכות. Power and grandeur are something that ought to make an impression on us, and enable us to see the world from a different perspective.

The פסוקים tells us that the reason why we recite the ten מלכיות is כדי שתמליכוני עליכם. They aren't meant to be just read or sung, rather they have a deep and profound purpose: to change the way we relate to reality.

מלכות, kingship, carries with it duties and responsibilities. הקב"ה is our benevolent King Who creates us and gives us life. He constantly looks after us and takes care of our every need. In turn, we have responsibilities to the הקב"ה. Awareness of these responsibilities and accepting them upon ourselves is called עול מלכות שמים.

ראש השנה is referred to in many ספרים as being the day of אבינו, the one who discovered that mortal men can have a relationship with the Infinite Creator. But as mentioned, relationships work both ways. הקב"ה does everything for us but needs nothing Himself, so what can we do for Him?

אברהם discovered the answer to this question too: the one thing that הקב"ה "needs" us for is to bring awareness of Him into the world. If He were to do this Himself, we would all lose our free will. That is what ככלל ישראל dedicated his life to and that is the purpose of ישראל as well. Every single מצוה we do, reveals more קדושה, more רוחניות in the world and creates that קידוש השם, with the ultimate גילוי of ראש השנה תפילות, which is the theme of all of our תפילות.

Perhaps that's why מלכיות begins with the words עלינו - it is upon us!

**Q. HOW CAN I EVER TRULY DO עבירות I'VE DONE SO MANY תשובה AND THERE IS NO WAY I CAN REALLY HAVE חרטה AND SAY 'וידוי' FOR EVERY BAD THING THAT I HAVE DONE.**

**A. I CAN'T THINK OF A MORE IMPORTANT QUESTION FOR THIS TIME OF YEAR! IMAGINE TWO PEOPLE DRIVING THEIR CARS FROM LONDON TO MANCHESTER. YANKY REALISES AFTER A WHILE THAT HE HAS MISSED THE TURNING AND SO HE TURNS AROUND AT THE NEXT EXIT. MOISHY HAS JUST MISSED THE EXIT BUT HAS NOT REALISED, AND IS STILL BLISSFULLY UNAWARE THAT HE'S DRIVING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION. WHO IS CLOSER TO HIS DESTINATION? TECHNICALLY MOISHY. BUT THE TRUTH OF COURSE IS THAT YANKY IS A LOT CLOSER TO WHERE HE NEEDS TO BE BECAUSE HE IS AWARE OF HIS MISTAKE AND HE HAS TURNED AROUND. THE ROOT OF THE WORD תשובה IS 'שב', TO RETURN. IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT ALTHOUGH תשובה HAS MANY LEVELS, THE MOST BASIC ELEMENT OF תשובה IS SIMPLY TO TURN AROUND. TO RECALIBRATE. WHILE STILL FAR FROM YOUR DESTINATION, YOU ARE AT LEAST ON THE RIGHT ROAD THAT WILL BRING YOU CLOSER TO ה'.**

## קריאת התורה יום א'

וה'פקד את שרה...

The *leining* for the first day of ראש השנה tells the story of שרה's relief from her childlessness with the news that she would be blessed with a son. The ראש גמרא tells us that this was brought about on ראש השנה and nine months later יצחק was born. The same is true for רחל who conceived on ראש השנה and was blessed with יוסף, as well as חנה, who we read about in the הפטרה who was given the gift of שמואל. Immediately we can derive a powerful lesson relating to ראש השנה – through the power of תפילה, especially on this auspicious day, one can bring down tremendous ברכה from שמים.

But there is another message contained within the choice of this קריאת התורה. There are a few other major events for which ראש השנה is the anniversary. For example, חז"ל tell us that יוסף was released from prison on this day. Furthermore, the מצרים in עבודה also ceased on ראש השנה. What is the connection between all these events and what is their relationship to the יום הדין?

The answer is that they all carry the same significance: each one is a story of hope, of anticipation, of optimism. יוסף is given the news he'll be a free man again. The מצרים can see the light at the end of the long tunnel. And the אמהות, suffering in their barrenness, are suddenly aware that they will one day bear children. Notice, ראש השנה is not the day the children were born; it is the day they become aware of the good news in the future.

If you look carefully at the תפילות that are inserted into the third ברכה of each שמו"ע of נוראים, you will see that they are bursting with optimism for the future, for a better world: ובכן צדיקים יראו וישמחו...

Of course, these words are referring to the ultimate גאולה. But each and every person on ראש השנה can and should look forward to their own personal better future. This is also why we eat סימנים at night. Despite the fact that ראש השנה is a day of dread and foreboding, nevertheless we are excited and hopeful for better times ahead...

## שופרות

The **Ponovezher Rov** זצ"ל once entered his Yeshiva and asked the bochorim: What would you do if one of your roommates was having a nightmare in which a huge bear with its jaws wide open was threatening to eat him alive?

And he provided the answer: You'd wake him up! You'd wake him up! And with that, all his fears would melt away. Similarly, a person can be caught up in the web of the יצר הרע and feel like there is no way out. But all he needs to do is wake up and realise that all the trappings of This World are false. This is an essential message that we come across in all the תפילות of ימים נוראים. We *daven* that all evil should dissipate like a cloud. Why a cloud? Because a cloud appears threatening and ominous. But really, it's just air. Similarly, the שטן appears as this formidable foe that can't be overcome. But it's just a nightmare. If we stir ourselves awake and employ our שכל, then we can easily see through the charade of the יצר הרע and wave it away.

This is the function of the שופר, as the רמב"ם famously writes: Even though blowing שופר on ר"ה is a גזירת ר"ה, nevertheless it contains a message: Wake up slumberers from your sleep! Understand that all the difficulties and challenges, both גשמי and רוחני, are just smokescreens thrown up by the שטן to try and discourage you. But if you rise up and become alert to its mischief, then you will not be fooled. Indeed, as we mention throughout סליחות, we are promised that ה' will "erase your sins like a cloud and like smoke your iniquities", because in fact it really is just a nightmare.

And so, as you stand in *Shul* listening to the תקיעות this year, remember the message of the פוניביז' רב: Wake him up! Wake him up! And once awake, look around, take in the קדושה of the בית המדרש, see the sincerity of the מתפללים, recognise that this is actually what life is all about and say to הקב"ה: Now please blow this cloud away once and for all...

## זכרונות

The אמרו לפני זכרונות שיעלה, 'ראש השנה גמרא in says, 'זכרוניכם לפני לטובה'. The simple interpretation of the גמרא is that by saying יצחק עקידת which is an integral part of זכרונות, we cause הקב"ה to remember us for the good. We daven that in the זכות of our forefather אבינו יצחק, we should be sealed in the ספר החיים.

However, **Rav Shlomo Wolbe** זצ"ל gives a fascinating alternative idea in how to explain the above גמרא. Firstly, we need to really understand what זכרונות are all about.

We say in the תפילה of Zichronos: 'לפניך נגלו כל תעלומות', 'before you all secret things are revealed, and all hidden things from the beginning of time'.

**Rav Chaim Friedlander** זצ"ל explains that "נסתרות" are activities which are physically covered or hidden. Much of we do would be considered נסתר, actions that חז"ל refer to as עצמו לבין עצמו, בינו לבין עצמו, between man and himself. When we daven, only we know how much כוונה we have; when we learn only we know how much we are really focused. But הקב"ה knows it all and judges us based on how much effort we have put into our מצוות. "תעלומות" however, are things which don't involve physical action, rather, they are hidden deep within the recesses of our hearts and our subconscious reasonings behind our actions. נפשיות We ourselves may not even be aware of them, however, knows all of our subconscious feelings too as well as all the hidden experiences that we go through.

Our עבודה is to be more in touch with ourselves, to make a פשבון on a regular basis and try and understand why we do things and why we act in certain ways, for only once we understand what it is that we do, and why we do it, can we then make a conscious and concerted effort to put it right.

Therefore, says Rav Wolbe, our very act of saying זכרונות, our admission that we have many layers of motivation and thought that הקב"ה judges us on, is in itself a tremendous זכות! We are accepting that not all מצוות that we do are really perfect, which is the first stage of trying to rectify our actions, with a קבלה to try improve our motives and thoughts.

Therefore 'אמרו לפני זכרונות', when you admit that there is no hiding from ה', for He sees into the deepest recesses of our hearts and minds, that itself causes 'שיעלה זכרוניכם', and 'ה' will remember us for the good and grant us a sweet new year.

## Wishing all our readers a

## כתיבה וחתימה טובה



**Q. IF ראש השנה IS THE יום הדין, WHY DON'T WE DO ON THIS DAY?**

**A. WE ABSOLUTELY DO DO ראש השנה, IT'S JUST THAT IT'S A DIFFERENT TYPE OF תשובה! יום כפור TO תשובה TAKES US BACK TO THE DAY WHEN אדם הראשון WAS CREATED, THE SIXTH DAY OF THE CREATION OF אדם IS WHEN HIS MISSION AND ALL OF HIS RESOURCES WERE ALLOCATED.**

**SIMILARLY, ON THIS הדין יום WE ALSO GET EVALUATED IN TERMS OF OUR MISSION AND RESOURCES.**

**ראש השנה IS THE DAY WHEN WE ASK OURSELVES THE MOST BASIC OF ALL QUESTIONS: WHAT DO WE WANT THOSE RESOURCES FOR? WHAT IS OUR MISSION, AND תפקיד ותכלית? OF THE DAY PROVIDE US WITH SOME CLARITY AND INSIGHT TO...**

**...HELP US WITH THESE QUESTIONS. YOU WILL NOTICE THAT THE שמונה עשרה DOES NOT FOCUS ON OUR NEEDS AT ALL. RATHER WE SPEAK ABOUT THE BIGGEST PICTURE POSSIBLE, THE GOAL OF ALL OF CREATION, ימות המשיח, WHEN ALL OF MANKIND WILL BECOME AWARE OF הקב"ה.**

**WE ARE DEEPENING OUR AND IN הקב"ה IN אמונה OURSELVES, BECAUSE EACH INDIVIDUAL איד HAS THE**

**RESPONSIBILITY TO PAVE THE WAY TO גאולה THROUGH BEING IN THEIR OWN מקדש שם שמים!**

**BY ALIGNING OUR HOPES AND DREAMS WITH THE REASON FOR WHICH הקב"ה CREATED THE WORLD, WE ARE EMBARKING ON THE JOURNEY OF תשובה, WHICH LITERALLY MEANS 'RETURN'. WE ARE RETURNING TO OUR NATURAL STATE, AS CREATIONS OF הקב"ה WHO HAVE A VITALLY IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY.**

## קריאת התורה

### Day 2

ראש השנה is one of the central themes of עקידת יצחק. We ask אברהם אבינו זכות הקב"ה that in being willing to sacrifice his precious only child, his descendants should merit a sweet new year.

The מפרשים ask various questions on the centrality of the ראש השנה to עקידת יצחק. Firstly, many Yidden over the course of history have willingly and even wholeheartedly given up their lives for הקב"ה. What was so special about עקידת יצחק, so much so that we ask for a שנה טובה for the whole of כלל ישראל many millennia later?

Secondly, we know that when אברהם was informed about the impending destruction of סדום, he beseeched הקב"ה to annul his decree. Why by the עקידה, which seemed to go against all logic, didn't אברהם question or at least daven that יצחק should stay alive?

To answer the above questions we need to understand the depth of the נסיון of אברהם. עקידה had been told, 'כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע', כלל ישראל would be built through יצחק אבינו. He was now told to kill that promised future and for all intents and purposes to turn הקב"ה into a liar!

He had also spent his life preaching ה's values, teaching the מדה of חסד, the abhorrence of murder and fighting against the idolatry ideal of human sacrifice. And now he was being told to sacrifice and murder his own son! Could there be a bigger חילול ה' than that, after he had spent his life teaching humanity the very opposite of what he was about to do?!

The נסיון of the עקידה was the deepest possible נסיון of אמונה. It was incomprehensible. אברהם could have easily said, 'I'm not listening to ה' because after all, He told me that יצחק is the future!' He could have also excused himself by imagining the terrible חילול ה' that would ensue. But he didn't. He asked no questions. He didn't even daven out of fear that he may have the slightest kernel of doubt in ה' better judgement if he would daven for his son!

The **Brisker Rov** said, 'אמונה starts where one's שכל ends'. The real test of our אמונה is if even when things are totally incomprehensible, we can still say, that is the will of ה' and I must obey. That is the lesson to learn from אברהם אבינו, and if we internalise it, we will surely be שנה טובה ומתוקה to a זוכה.

## HOLY SHOFAR

In the early 20th Century there was a *Choshuve Yid* living in ירושלים called Reb Yoel Chaim Weissfinger who was a legendary בעל תוקע. Each year, hundreds of Yidden would flock to his Shul to hear him blow שופר. In 1913, Reb Yoel Chaim was נפטר. When his 2 sons, Shimon and Leibel, split the ירושה, they agreed that Shimon would inherit their father's small grocery store and Leibel would take the שופר. Shimon eventually moved to America where he became a wealthy man.

Five years later, in 1918, Britain was at war with the Ottoman Empire and Leibel was arrested by the Ottomans and deported to Egypt. When Shimon heard about his brother's incarceration, he immediately travelled to Egypt where he secured Leibel's release and gave him a considerable sum of money to help him get back on his feet. Leibel was overcome with gratitude and presented the precious שופר as a gift to Shimon for saving his life. Shimon was overwhelmed at the gift, and didn't take his eye off the small suitcase containing the package during the entire voyage back to America. When he arrived home, he excitedly went to retrieve the שופר to show his family. He opened his suitcase, but to his utmost dismay the package containing the שופר had vanished!

Meanwhile, Leibel continued to struggle to support his family and made the decision to move to Poland where he became the רב in a small town. Soon thereafter, the dark clouds of war enveloped Poland and Leibel spent many torturous years in concentration camps. When the war ended, Leibel wandered from DP camp to DP camp, never managing to settle anywhere. One ראש השנה night, Leibel and a group of friends found themselves in Italy, staying at the home of a kind hearted Italian farmer. They were despondent as they realised they would have no שופר to blow the following day. Suddenly, the farmer walked in with a small package. He said, "Many years ago, I was a crew member on a ship which sailed from Palestine to America. There was a Jew there who seemed to be guarding a small suitcase with his very life. I'm ashamed to admit it, but when we docked, I took advantage of the noise and tumult to quickly open his suitcase and remove a carefully wrapped parcel inside expecting it to hide expensive jewellery. I was very disappointed to see that all it contained was a strange looking horn. I realised that it must be a religious object and have been waiting all these years to find Jews to return the object to them."

Leibel took hold of the item and paled. It was none other than his own father's holy שופר.

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