

THE COMMUNITY Parasha Sheet



LONDON'S LEADING PLATFORM FOR STUDENTS AND YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

TAL wishes the community a sweet and happy New Year 5781!! Tizku leshanim rabot ne-imot vetovot.

RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

DIRECTOR TAL



WRITE YOUR BOOK!

A recent survey by the National Centre for Social Research found that for the first time, more than half of people in the UK (53%) described themselves as having "no religion".

Among those aged between 18 and 25, the proportion was higher at 71%.

This greatly contrasted with 75% of people aged 75 and over who said they were religious.

Wow, the trend is harsh...the youth seem to be offloading religion whilst the elders are hanging on.

Is that really the case?

Rosh Hashanah (the new Jewish Year) is upon us. A time for change, awakening, inspiration and rebuilding our relationship with G-d.

What's interesting to note is the way we relate to this day. Rosh Hashanah is literally translated as the head of the year. Why do we not call this exceptional day Shana Chadasha (New Year)? What's special about the head?

The Shulchan Aruch (583:2) writes that on Rosh Hashanah we eat the head of a lamb to symbolise that "we should be as a head and not as a tail, and to remember the ram at the Akedat (binding of) Yitzchak."

The Chayei Adam mentions the custom to use fish in its stead and to say that "we should multiply like fish and that no evil eye be upon us".

What is interesting is the double language used. Wouldn't it have been enough to say we wish to be at the head? Why do we need to add the words and not the tail?

Furthermore in Parshat Ki Tavo (28:13) the Torah relates that G-d will place us at the head, and not at the tail.

Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshitz Ztz"l explains with the famous words in Pirkei Avot 4:15 which state that we should strive to be the tail of a lion and not the head of a fox.

R Eibeshitz explains that here too we are asking G-d that He make us the head. But not the head of foxes or even lions, the head of heads!

What do I mean by the head of heads?

Let me explain with a fascinating story.

As a young man Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky Ztz"l found himself in an ever changing world through the rise in power of communism and the Nazis, ►

TIMES

29 Elul 5780 – 2 Tishrei 5781
YOM TOV LIGHTING / SHABBAT 6:54PM
1ST DAY YOM TOV LIGHTING 7:54 PM
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THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"Don't be afraid to start over. It's a new chance to rebuild what you want."

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- 
DVAR TORAH P1-2
 Write Your Book!
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
- 
DVAR TORAH P.3
 Rosh Hashana Message
THE CHIEF RABBI
- 
DVAR TORAH P.4
 The Clarion Call
RABBI MASHIACH KELATY
- 
DVAR TORAH P.5
 Judaism - Just a Religion
RABBI DOVIE SCHOCHET
- 
DVAR TORAH P.6
 Rosh Hashana 5781
RABBI MORDECHAI FHIMA
- 
HALACHOT P.7
 Are Women Required to Hear the Shofar?
RABBI ELI MANSOUR
- 
ROSH HASHANA SEDER P.7

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leading to the Second World War. Times were tough and many of the Yeshivot escaped Poland and headed for Vilna, Lithuania. They thought they could seek refuge there, but were soon traumatised as the Russian tanks rolled through the towns. They were chased and eventually “caught” (for no reason) and sent off to Siberia to a harsh labour camp.

As they arrived they were greeted by one of the commanders who stood them up in the freezing cold and informed them that they were there to stay. In fact he told them they would be there for 25 years!

Amongst the group of Jews, Poles and Lithuanians was the previous Minister of Education of Lithuania- an elderly eighty year old man who had been through much to get to where he was; now broke down crying.

Understanding their situation Rabbi Galinsky made a quick calculation as to how old he would be when they left twenty five years later. But alas his calculation soon broke down as he was shouted at by the commander. “You see those gates, no one leaves there alive!” said the commander. I once heard Rabbi Galinsky personally relate his predicament.

“What could I do? How should I pray to G-d to save me?”

Almighty G-d, I implore you to let me have the strength to survive and if that’s too much, please at least let me have a Jewish burial.

If someone would have approached me and told me at that time not to worry, calming my fears by saying

“One day you will leave this place and go to Israel where you will set up a Torah Academy, including a Yeshiva and range of Kolelim.

You will be blessed with a large family and merit to see your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren in health, living a rich Jewish life.

And that when you will be invited to travel outside of Israel it would be hard for your to arrange as you will be attending so many family engagements, weddings, Bar Mitzvah’s” I would have said Rachok Miyeshuati Divrei Shaagati – literally meaning man asks for a lot and receives a little.

I learned with my own flesh that the explanation is the exact opposite.

All I asked for was the simple strength to survive and if that was too much then at least a Jewish burial. And G-d in turn blessed me with the abundance that I have experienced!”

Therefore my friends when it comes to Rosh Hashanah we ask G-d please let us be the head.

But the head of what?

Not the peak of what our understanding is. What we think is the head, is really just the tail. Therefore we beseech the Almighty to bless us to be the head in His understanding, rather than what we perceive to be the head, yet is really the tail.

A message to generation Z.

It’s not all as it seems. There is much more depth to what you think is the peak.

This is the easy come easy go generation where what are thought of as Super Computers – the heads of the computer world - are a few years later already considered obsolete. Where fun and action are quick to arrive, yet don’t seem to leave a lasting impression.

What are your desires for the next year? Rosh Hashanah is the first page in a blank book of hundreds of pages. Write a good one!

What shall we ask for? Better gaming powers, technological advances that will enable us to text, video call, drive unmanned vehicles, get to the moon and back?

What we think is the head – the top of our list of asks, could actually be the tail.

So we ask G-d – You realise what is at the top – please put us there!

Judaism has so much to offer, boasting a rich legacy of dialogue and thought provoking debate to cultivate both wisdom and compassion. There is a reason why so many people in the previous generations died for their belief!

Religion is dying? Not with us. We have been crushed in the past, yet we have now risen and cultivated barren land, returning to the promised land of our forefathers – Israel. We have rebuilt the Torah learning centres that were destroyed by the evil Nazis. And we will continue to learn from the book of a Living G-d that Was, Is and always Will Be.

Judaism is alive and well, thriving, offering life, teaching love, kindness, free will and true happiness. Judaism has an enormous wealth of wisdom and experience to offer this troubled world, and we as Jews ought to be proud to speak about it with enthusiasm and dignity.

As the New Year arrives remember the book is called opportunity and Rosh Hashanah is the first chapter in the book. Grab it, embrace it and create your Jewish future.

■ Shana Tova

Rabbi Jonathan Tawil

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THE CHIEF RABBI'S ROSH HASHANAH MESSAGE 5781



As I reflect on an extraordinary year, my first thoughts are with those whose lives were tragically cut short by the Coronavirus. May their memories be for a blessing and may their families find comfort in their sad loss.

My heart goes out to the many whose health, whether physical or mental, has been affected and to those who are facing severe financial hardship or crises in their personal relationships. The restrictions on social interaction, abrupt changes to our routine and the grip of deep uncertainty have dramatically impacted the fabric of all of our lives in ways that we could never have imagined.

In the years to come, while many will admirably recall our resilience and forbearance during these most trying of times, ultimately the success of our response to this Pandemic will be judged not by how we felt, but by how we acted.

The Torah portion of Nitzavim, which is always read immediately prior to Rosh Hashanah, commences with these words: “You are all standing this day before the Lord your God; your heads, your tribes (shivtechem), your elders and your officers”.

In this list of national leaders, ‘tribes’ appears to be out of place. Mindful of the fact that ‘shvet’ also means ‘staff’ or ‘sceptre’, our commentators explain that the leaders of our people are being referred to according to the item that they carried that symbolised their role. In the same way as ‘the Crown’ refers to the monarch and ‘First Violin’ refers to an orchestra’s lead musician, a person who leads is known by the instrument of that leadership.

The message that emerges is extremely powerful. You are defined by what you do. The essence of a person is measured according to what they have achieved.

For this reason, we call community leaders ‘machers’ (makers). ‘Macher’ is a role that conveys respect, because the people who change the world are not the

dreamers and thinkers; the people who change the world are the ‘doers’.

On Yom Kippur, we read the book of Jonah, in which the prophet informs the inhabitants of Nineveh of their impending doom.

In response, they fast and repent for their evil ways. The text captures that epic event in just a few words: “God saw their deeds”. Their words of apology and their fasting were merely steps towards a life-changing moment. What concerned God was not their protestations, but their actions.

This year, without any preparation whatsoever, every one of our communities was plunged into a crisis of unprecedented proportions.

Your response has been simply magnificent. With our Shuls closed, our communities redoubled their creativity and their altruism. We have never known such an outpouring of compassion, such acts of selfless care for the vulnerable and such generosity in charitable giving.

I have no doubt that such action will remain at the heart of our Covid-19 response for as long as it takes us to overcome the dangers it presents to all of humankind.

As we commence 5781, may Hashem inscribe and seal each and every one of us in the Book of Life, good health, peace and fulfilment.

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis
September 2020 • Ellul 5780

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ephraim Mirvis". The signature is written in a cursive style.



Shana Tova 5781





THE CLARION CALL

There is a widely discussed question of why Rosh HaShanah precedes Yom HaKippur. Logically, it would seem to make more sense-and certainly be to our advantage-for the day of Mercy, when we are forgiven for our sins to precede the day in which we are judged for those sins.

Rav Shimon Schwab (1908-1995) answers this question. To appreciate the answer, we must first analyze the second chapter of Yehoshua (which we read as the Haftarah for Parshas Shlach). The first city that was conquered by Yehoshua after entering the land of Israel was Jericho. Yehoshua sent out spies to reconnoiter the land. The spies stayed in the home of Rachav the Zonah. There are commentaries who identify Rachav as an innkeeper, basing the word Zonah on her word Mazon (food). However, as the Gemarah implies, the simple reading of the pasukim [verses] is that Rachav was a woman of ill repute-the normal meaning of the word Zonah comes from the word Zenus-(sexual immorality).

Rachav provided the spies with the information that they wanted to hear. "I know that Hashem has given you the Land, and that your terror has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the Land have melted because of you..."

The Talmud asks [Zevachim 116a], "How did Rachav know that the whole country was in mortal fear of the Jews?" The Gemara is making an inference from

Rachav's statement that "neither did there remain any more spirit in any man". Rachav was testifying to the loss of spirit and initiative based on personal professional knowledge. She had served as a harlot since she was ten years old. This was her profession throughout the forty years when the Jews were wandering in the wilderness. During this period, there was not a prince or ruler in the area who did not come by and use her services.

At this point of time, at the age of fifty, Rachav repented and actually converted to Judaism. She confessed to G-d that during her years of sin, she made use of three devices to secretly bring customers into and out of her residence: The rope, the window, and the wall. Therefore, she now used these same three items to help the spies escape from her dwelling and from being noticed by the Canaanites, thereby saving their lives. She asked that she be forgiven for her inappropriate use of these devices by virtue of the fact that she now risked her life and used them for a laudatory reason. This is the simple reading of the Gemara in Zevachim.

Rabbi Schwab is not satisfied with this interpretation. Rav Schwab asks, what does it mean that she used the rope, the window, and the wall for people to sin? She ran a house of ill repute for forty years. Everyone must have known exactly what was going on in that house. There was no reason to have a secret entrance by way of the window and rope. After 40 years, who were these princes and kings trying to fool? What were they trying to hide by climbing up the wall and entering through the window? Everyone knew Rachav the harlot and the nature of her business.

Rav Schwab interprets the Gemara differently. The Gemara is teaching us one

of the secrets of Repentance. What finally inspired Rachav to repent? Rachav was inspired to repent through the realization that after 40 years in business, there were still people who were embarrassed to walk into her front door! There were still people who would be so ashamed that they would

only enter by way of the rope, the wall, and the window. The fact was that after all these years, there were still people who had a modicum of dignity and embarrassment. They possessed some latent degree of sensitivity and morality that at least prevented them from committing this sin in a blatant fashion. Despite the fact that the times and the society were immersed in immorality, there were still individuals who at least had a sense of guilt, some remnant intuition of possessing a "Tzelem Elokim" [Divine Image]. Teshuvah can only begin under such circumstances.

Teshuvah can only begin if I do not give up on myself. If I believe that I am totally worthless, then I cannot begin to think about repentance.

However, when I realize that somewhere deep down inside, there is still the dignity of man, there is still something holy, then I can use that feeling and begin the trek down the road to repentance. This is what Rachav meant when she referred to the rope, the window, and the wall.

The Mishneh states "Don't be wicked in your own eyes" [Avot 2:13] This is why Rosh HaShanah must precede Yom Kippur. In order for a person to begin the process of Teshuvah, he must first realize that he is somebody of value. He must take note: I am a son of Israel. I have a King in Heaven. I am a

servant of the King. Yes, I may not have been a very good servant, but at least I can say that I am His servant.

The realization that there is a King and that I am His servant, and therefore that I have self worth, is a prerequisite for the process of Repentance. If we would start the Ten Days of Repentance merely with confession-merely with a recitation of all the sins that we committed, we would overwhelm ourselves with our worthlessness, and we would not be in a position to repent.

On Rosh HaShanah, we never say the words "Al Chet" (upon the sins...) or "Ashamnu" (we are guilty). Leave the sins out of it, for the meanwhile. On this day, a person must think about who he is, his vast potential, and his goal in life. From such a perspective, repentance may flow forward. The Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760) suggests a beautiful Chassidische insight on this past week's portion: "If your dispersed shall be at the ends of Heaven, from there the L-rd your G-d will gather you and take you." [Devorim 30:4]

The Baal Shem Tov comments that we would have expected the pasuk [verse] to read "If your dispersed shall be at the ends of the Earth." However, the pasuk says "...at the ends of the Heaven". The Baal Shem Tov

teaches the same lesson that we mentioned above: The only time that a person can be

gathered back to G-d, is if "Heavenliness" is still present within the person. If a person feels that he still has a Heavenly attachment - despite the fact that he may have sullied himself with the pleasures of the earth-then from there G-d can gather him back.

Rachav was a harlot for 40 years, but she eventually married Yehoshua bin Nun, the greatest man of his generation. It all began with her contemplation of the wall, the rope, and the window - with her recognition that man - for all of his shortcomings - still possesses holiness. That must be the beginning of the path to Teshuvah. Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon gives ten different reasons for blowing the Shofar.

One is in order to recall the gathering of the Jews at Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah, where "the sound of the Shofar was very great." [Exodus 19:16]

Also, we remind ourselves of the future, when the call of the great shofar will bring an end to our exile.

The Ohr Gedalyahu, Rav Gedalia Schorr zt"l, points out that in the Talmud, Tractate Rosh HaShanah, many of the laws concerning blowing of the Shofar are derived from the laws of blowing the Shofar at the Jubilee Year. In the 50th year, all land returned to the family that originally inherited it, and slaves went free. So we see that the call of the Shofar is connected to the Shofar blast of the Jubilee, which signified freedom, like the great shofar at the end of exile will proclaim our freedom. Here as well, on Rosh HaShanah, the Shofar is calling for freedom-freedom from the evil inclination .G-d freed us from slavery and brought us to Mt. Sinai, where He gave us the tools to be truly free of the worst master of all. It is easy for a person to fall prey to laziness, temptation, depression, all derived from the same source. There is nothing the evil inclination wants more than for a person to be too tired to care, too upset by his or her perceived inadequacy to imagine that G-d wants or cares for his or her repentance. Yet G-d gave us the tools to free ourselves.

Rambam writes in his Laws of Repentance, 3:4: "Although the blowing of the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a decree of the Torah [a law issued without an accompanying reason], there is a hint [of meaning] within it, as if it were saying, 'awake, sleeping ones, from your slumber, and those napping arise from your naps, examine your actions and return sincerely to G-d, and remember your Creator.'"

The Shofar cries out: wake up! You are free! You can set aside all that came before, and break the chains-break the patterns of misbehavior and self-destruction which have dogged your path.

This, says Rav Schorr, is the message of the Shofar-to awaken a person to this freedom, to the promise which awaits every one of us. ■



JUDAISM – JUST A RELIGION?

Have you ever felt that being Jewish can be limiting and restricting? Or have you perhaps viewed Yiddishkeit as a systematic rigid construct with no room for self-expression and passion? If the answer to the above is “No”, then this article is probably not for you. However, if the answer to the above is “Yes”, then you might want to keep reading.

From my personal experience and encounters with others, many ask, “Why does Hashem care if I flip a switch on Shabbos?” or “What difference do all these Mitzvos make to Hashem?” Whilst these are good questions, they stem, however, from a mistaken notion that Judaism is strictly a religion, when in truth it is so much more.

On Rosh Hashanah, we do not celebrate the creation of the world. We celebrate our relationship with Hashem. What Rosh Hashanah commemorates is Hashem wanting to have a relationship, so He created Adam and Chava. Hashem wanted to be loved, so He created you and me. This paradigm shift will help you see the Mitzvos in a whole new light.

There are three categories of Mitzvos: Testaments (Eidus), Statutes (Chukim) and Logical commands (Mishpatim). These three categories also reflect themselves in relationships that we have with our spouses, for example;

Testaments – With Hashem, this for example, is when we celebrate the festivals as an affirmation and appreciation of Him looking after us. Correspondingly, with our spouse, it is when we celebrate special days, such as our anniversary or partners’ birthday, to appreciate and enhance our relationship.

Statutes – With Hashem, these are laws which make no sense to us such as not mixing wool and linen. Similarly in a marriage, sometimes a leap of faith is required to demonstrate your love.

Logical commands – With Hashem, these are obvious laws, such as not stealing or murdering. In the same way, with our spouse, there are obvious traits needed in order to create a thriving relationship, such as being honest and loyal.

In fact, we see that there are many instances throughout the Torah where it speaks about our relationship with Hashem and how He is often referred to as our spouse, as will now be explained.

Instead of viewing Mitzvos strictly as a list of commands, we should perceive them as opportunities to bond with our loved one. For example, Shabbos is not a day full of restrictions. Shabbos is a day when Hashem tells us, “Listen, I know you’ve been busy all week, but I miss you and I crave your attention. Please put down your phone and focus on me.” Nor should the idea of prayer be seen as a burden as something that we have to do three times a day, but instead as an opportunity to express ourselves to Hashem and tell Him, “I love you.”

Take a look at the days preceding Rosh Hashanah itself. The month of Elul is famously known as an acronym for, “I am to my Beloved and my Beloved is unto me”. This is a time when Hashem tells us, “Listen, it’s been a long year. I’ve done some things you don’t like, you’ve done some things I don’t like, let’s bury the hatchet and start over.”

Nowadays, there exist many books that advise and give guidance for a successful marriage. The things one should avoid and the things one should pursue. The book of Halacha is our GPS guide for a successful marriage with Hashem. In fact, all too often, the word Halacha is loosely translated as “Jewish Law”, when a more literal translation means “Path”.

Yiddishkeit is not merely a religion, it is bond that we have with Hashem. Rosh Hashanah is the time when Hashem brought us into being so that we can have a relationship with Him. It is a time to have a fresh start at our marriage and to make this coming year the best one yet in our relationship. ■

Shanah Tovah!



ROSH HASHANA 5781

This year we have a very special Rosh Hashana after the effect of having been out of routine for some time. Some of us have not even stepped into a Synagogue for months and hence the preparation for these upcoming awesome days is significantly more challenging.

The changes wrought by these difficult times have had an affect on many, with some expressing a feeling of great difficulty in reconnecting to the Almighty.

We must all remember the wise words of the Great Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, of blessed memory, "As long as the candle is still burning, it is still possible to accomplish and to mend."

This is how the story goes. Late one night, Rabbi Salanter was walking home and passed by a shoemaker's workshop. Despite it being very late, he observed the shoemaker was still busy, working by the light of a single candle. "Why are you still working?" Rabbi Salanter asked him. "It is very late and soon the candle will go out."

The shoemaker replied "As long as the candle is still burning it is still possible to accomplish and to mend shoes." This simple and seemingly innocent reply sent shockwaves through the Rabbi's holy mind! How true this is for our spiritual workshop! As long as the candle of our earthly existence still burns, we can still fix ourselves. Another Mishna, another Passuk, another Daf Gemara, an act of kindness. In his wisdom, Rabbi Salanter realized this message is true for all of us. It's never too late to change.

The Jewish flame is still burning in the hearts of every Jew and Jewess and our job is to do what it takes to feed that flame and fan it in the direction of growth so every Jewish soul may shine in all its splendour.

We know that during Aseret Yeme Teshuva we try to be especially careful in keeping all the Mitzvot and Halachot to the best of our ability. It is recorded in Halacha that although throughout the year there is room for allowing the consumption of Pat Palter, during these days we should refrain from doing so. Every year people ask what is the point of doing so much effort and attaining a closeness to Hashem during this period, when deep down we know that we will go back to our old ways after it is over.

But the answer is simple, just like we wash our clothes even though we are sure that they will become dirty again, our holy soul needs to be cleansed from the dirt and grime of sin in order to shine in front of Hashem, at least during this period.

Every year I tell my community the following story. One Motsaei Shabbat in the month of Elul, I was in Ramat Gan and a friend asked me to come join him for Selichot. As we walked towards the Synagogue, I see throngs of men following behind in direction of the Synagogue. My first impression when seeing how they looked and were dressed was that these people were going for Saturday night-out. How wrong I was. They all followed us into the synagogue. The room was packed to the rafters. The Rabbi rose and announced that we would be reciting Tikkun Chatzot followed by Selichot. The atmosphere was electrifying and charged with emotion. I could see the true desire of each Jew expressed as a pure, simple and unadulterated longing for holiness and connection to Hashem. This was the light of every Jew, the light that the great Rabbi Salanter perceived.

The Rambam writes the following; ...A sudden transition from one opposite to another is impossible and therefore man, according to his nature, is not capable of abandoning suddenly all to which he was accustomed (Guide for the Perplexed 3:23).

Making major changes in our lives is possible, but Maimonides' advice reminds us to take it slow, one step at a time. Taking incremental steps makes it more likely that we'll stick with new resolutions and routines.

Remember that while it can be hard to start to change, with effort and practice, things do get easier. Keeping this in mind can help us over the initial discomfort of trying something new.

Let's take all this in mind and realise that even in our current situation, our light still shines bright and by taking small calculated steps, nothing stands in our way to grow close to Hashem and to the keeping of his Torah. ■

**Wishing all the community Shana Tova Umetouka!
Rabbi Mordechai Fhima**

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HALACHOT - RABBI ELI MANSOUR

ROSH HASHANAH – ARE WOMEN REQUIRED TO HEAR THE SHOFAR?

The Shulhan Aruch (Orah Haim 589) writes that the obligation of Shofar on Rosh Hashanah falls under the category of “Misvot Aseh She’ha’zman Gerama” – affirmative commands that apply only at specific times – and, as such, women are exempt from this obligation. Strictly speaking, then, women are not required to hear the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah. However, as noted by the Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909), women have taken it upon themselves to hear the sounding of the Shofar, even though they are not strictly obligated to do so. He adds that it was customary in his community in Baghdad that when a woman was unable to attend the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah, somebody would go to her home to sound the Shofar for her, so she could fulfill the Misva.

This custom mentioned by the Ben Ish Hai is noteworthy, for two reasons.

First, it shows that he followed the ruling of the Shulhan Aruch that one may sound the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah for women. The Peri Hadash (Rav Hizkiya Da Silva, 1659-1698) disagrees with this position, and maintains that it is forbidden to blow the Shofar only for a woman or group of women. Sounding a Shofar is forbidden on Yom Tob, and is permitted on Rosh Hashanah only for the purpose of fulfilling a Misva. The Peri Hadash thus contends that since women are exempt from the Misva, one who has already fulfilled the Misva may not sound the Shofar for a woman. The Ben Ish Hai clearly followed the Shulhan Aruch’s lenient position, that since women are, after all, credited with a Misva if they hear the Shofar, this suffices to permit blowing the Shofar for them on Rosh Hashanah.

Secondly, the Ben Ish Hai’s comments show that in his view, it is permissible to carry a Shofar through a public domain on Rosh Hashanah for the purpose of the blowing the Shofar for a woman. Tosafot (Talmudic commentaries by Medieval French and German scholars), in Masechet Hullin, maintained that carrying in a public domain is permitted on Yom Tob only for a “Sorech” (“need”), and blowing the Shofar for a woman does not qualify as a “Sorech” because they are not obligated to hear the Shofar. The Tur (Rabbeinu Yaakob Ben Asher, 1269-1343) cites the Ba’al Ha’ittur (Rav Yishak Ben Abba Mari, 1122-1193) as disagreeing, and claiming that since a woman fulfills a Misva if she hears a Shofar, this qualifies as a “need” for which carrying is allowed on Yom Tob. In truth, all this is

immaterial in light of the Shulhan Aruch’s ruling (Orah Haim 518), following the position of the Rambam (Rav Moshe Maimonides, Spain-Egypt, 1135-1204), that carrying on Yom Tob is allowed under any circumstances. According to Sephardic practice, then, there is no question at all whether a Shofar may be carried through a public domain on Rosh Hashanah for the sake of blowing it for a woman, since carrying is entirely permissible on Yom Tob (as long as the object is not Mukseh).

There is a famous debate among the Rishonim whether a woman who performs a Misva from which she is exempt recites a Beracha over the Misva. Tosafot, Rabbeinu Tam (France, 1100-1171), and several other Rishonim maintained that a woman does, in fact, recite a Beracha, since she does, after all, receive reward for performing the Misva. And although the text of the Beracha includes the word “Ve’sivanu” (“and commanded us”), implying that even the woman is included in the command, these Rishonim explain that this refers generically to the command given to the Jewish People, and does not imply that the women are obligated. The Rambam, however, writes that if a woman wears Sisit, she does not recite a Beracha, because it is a “Misvat Aseh She’ha’zman Gerama” from which she is exempt – clearly indicating that a woman who performs a Misva from which she is exempt does not recite a Beracha. The Shulhan Aruch follows the Rambam’s position, and thus rules that a woman does not recite a Beracha over the sounding of the Shofar, since she is not obligated in this Misva.

Interestingly, the Hid”a (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1806) concludes that despite the Shulhan Aruch’s ruling, women should, in fact, recite a Beracha over Misvot which they voluntarily perform. He notes a responsum by Rav Yaakob of Marvege (France, d. 1243), a Rabbi who would pose Halachic questions before going to sleep, and then receive an answer in a dream during the night. He compiled these responses in a work entitled “Min Ha’shamayim.” One of the questions he asked was whether women recite a Beracha when performing a “Misvat Aseh She’ha’zman Gerama,” and the response he received was that women indeed do recite a Beracha over such a Misva. The Hid”a asserts that if Maran (author of the Shulhan Aruch) would have been aware of this response, which was shown to Rav Yaakob of Marvege in a quasi-prophetic dream, he would have accepted this ruling. Accordingly, the Hid”a

ruled that women generally do recite a Beracha when they perform a “Misvat Aseh She’ha’zman Gerama.” He makes an exception, however, with regard to the Misva of Shofar, noting that even in Sephardic communities in which women recited a Beracha over other Misvot, like Lulab, women would not recite a Beracha over Shofar. This is also the ruling of Hacham Bension Abba Shaul (Israel, 1924-1998). Hacham Ovadia Yosef, however, challenges the Hid”a’s claim, arguing that we follow the Shulhan Aruch’s rulings even if they run in opposition to the positions revealed to Rav Yaakob of Marvege.

In any event, it is clear that according to all opinions, if one blows the Shofar only for a woman or group of women, no Beracha is recited.

The Ben Ish Hai writes that if a woman normally hears the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah – which is, of course, the commonly accepted practice – and one year she knows she will be unable to, then before Rosh Hashanah she must perform Hatarat Nedarim, annulling her implicit vow to observe this custom.

The Sha’areh Teshuba comments that it is preferable for a woman to hear the Shofar sounded by a man, rather than blow it herself or hear a woman blow it.

Finally, the custom that women ensure to hear the Shofar is limited to the first 30 Shofar sounds, which are blown in the synagogue before Musaf. A woman is not required – even by force of accepted custom – to hear all 101 sounds that are blown in the synagogue; it suffices to hear just 30 sounds.

Summary: Although women are exempt from the obligation of Shofar, it is customary for women to hear the first 30 sounds of the Shofar. If a woman cannot attend the synagogue, it is permissible, and proper, for a man to go to her home and blow the Shofar on her behalf. He may carry the Shofar through the public domain for this purpose. No Beracha is recited if the Shofar is being blown only for a woman or group of women. A woman who knows before Rosh Hashanah that she will be unable to hear the Shofar should perform Hatarat Nedarim. ■



Seder Of Rosh Hashanah

There are various customs with regards to the Seder of Rosh Hashanah. Some recite the below after Kidush before Hamotsi. The main Sephardi custom is to recite after chanting Kiddush, washing, and Hamotsi:

APPLE AND HONEY **תפוח בדבש**

Sweet New Year

Dip an apple in honey. - Some have the custom of using an apple cooked with sugar – and say:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שתתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה כדבש.

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that You renew for us a year good and sweet like honey.

7



BEETS / SPINACH **מלקא**

Related to the word שלק - to depart.

Take a beet and say:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שישתלקו אויבינו ושונאינו וכל מבקשי רעתנו.

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers that our enemies, haters and those who wish evil upon us shall depart.

4



DATES **תמרים**

Related to the word תם—to end.

Take a date and recite:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי העץ.

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the tree.

After eating the date, take another one and say:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שיתמו, אויבינו ושונאינו וכל מבקשי רעתנו.

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that there come an end to our enemies, haters and those who wish evil upon us.



1

RAM'S HEAD **ראש כבש**

May We Always Be At The Top

Take a pomegranate and say:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שנהיה לראש ולא לזנב.

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that we be a head and not a tail.

8



GOURD / PUMPKIN **קרא**

Related to the word קרע - to rip apart, and also קרא - to announce.

Take a gourd and say:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שתקרע רוע גור דיננו, ויקראו לפניך כיותינו.

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that the evil of our verdicts be ripped, and that our merits are announced before you.

5



SMALL BEANS **רוביא - לוביא**

Related to the words, רב - many, and לב - heart.

[The following blessing over vegetables is only recited if one has not yet recited Hamotsi]

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם בורא פרי האדמה.

Blessed are You, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the earth.

Take some Lubiya (kidney/black eyed) beans and say:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שירבו כיותינו ותלבגנו.

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that our merits shall increase and that You hearten us.



2

ותזכר לנו עקדתו ואילו של יצחק אבינו בן אברהם אבינו עליהם השלום.

...And You shall remember for us the binding and the ram of our forefather Isaac, the son of our forefather Abraham, peace be onto them.

Some have the alternative custom to take the head of a fish

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שנהיה לראש ולא לזנב.

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that we be a head and not a tail.

POMEGRANATE **רימון**

A Year Full of Mitzvot

Take a pomegranate and say:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שנהיה מלאים מצות כרמון.

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers, that we be filled with Mitzvot like a pomegranate [is filled with seeds].

6



LEEK **כרתי**

Related to the word כרת—to cut.

Take a leek and say:

יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שישפרתו אויבינו ושונאינו וכל מבקשי רעתנו.

May it be Your will, Lord our G-d and the G-d of our fathers that our enemies, haters, and those who wish evil upon us shall be cut down.



3

OTHER MINHAGIM

Others perform the Seder with the following order: Apple Honey, Leek, Spinach, Date, Pumpkin, Fish/Ram Head

Others have the custom to say:

גזר **CARROT** יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שתגזור עלינו גזרות טובות.

שומשום **SESAME** יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, שנפצה ונרבה בשמשום.

On Rosh Hashanah, everything we do is imbued with extreme significance. We stand in judgment before the Heavenly Court while each of our actions, words, and thoughts are scrutinized. To assist our efforts in carrying Divine mercy, we employ various customs transmitted by our ancient tradition. Among them is the regimen of the Simanim, literally signs or omens. These are the foods that we bring to the table at the beginning of the evening meal as auspicious indications of a propitious year to come.

By taking the Simanim at the beginning of the meal we set the tone for the entire meal, realising that this is a holy time, in which we must make extra effort to envelop the Festive table with Kedusha/sanctity and words of Prayer and Torah.

Moreover the Simanim remind us that our every activity on Rosh Hashanah is charged with meaning. If the foods we eat are so consequential, then certainly our conduct is critical. Accordingly, the Mishneh Berurah reminds us to spend these awesome days with a pleasant comportment in a mood of sublime joy. No less than abstaining from sour foods, any trace of anger or annoyance should be diligently avoided. Thus we will be insured a favourable judgment for a pleasant and sweet new year.

May this year be a year of blessing, health, success, peace and happiness for you, your family, Am Yisrael and the entire world.

Rabbi Jonathan Tawil
Director & Founder TAL

לשנה טובה תיכתבו ותיחתמו לאלתר לחיים טובים ולשלום