

A Dvar Torah to encourage matters of Yiras Shomayim prepared to be shared and discussed with your family at the Shabbos table

ראש השנה

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THE AVODA OF ראש השנה

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לע"נ שרה רבקה בת ר' יוסף ע"ה

לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

DAVENING WITH FEELING

When the Alter Rebbe was in Mezritch, he saw that on Erev Rosh Hashana his Rebbe the Mezritcher Maggid would daven a lengthy mincha with an arousing niggun and much crying, like one who is being separated a close friend. He would begin saying Tehillim while it was still day and continued until it was time to daven maariv. The Alter Rebbe taught his sons and grandchildren to conduct themselves this way, and all our Rebbeim followed this conduct as well.

(סה"ש תש"ב ע' 2)

One Rosh Hashanah, when the Alter Rebbe reached the words in maariv 'ותן פחדך' ('And so instill fear of You'), he began to roll on the floor saying, "Pach, pach," and was unable to finish the word for some time because of his great fear.

(לקוטי שיחות ח"א ע' 32)

Once at the time of maariv on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, the Mitteler Rebbe cried out, "Ai!" and all those present fell fainting. One chossid, who was generally hard hearted, did not stop crying throughout that entire first day of Rosh Hashanah.

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 14)

In תרמ"ו, the Rebbe Rashab was in Yalta and davened in a small shul of Poilisher Chassidim. On the night of Rosh Hashanah, the Rebbe remained in shul to daven after the others had already finished. 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 to have left a Yid and 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 am used to hearing joyful prayer with singing; however, here was a man standing 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." When the shamash entered the shul itself and saw the Rebbe Rashab davening, two fountains of tears were open to him.

(ספר המאמרים תשי"א ע' 90)

A visitor to Lubavitch recounts a description of the first night of Rosh Hashanah: The day is ending and the large shul is already filled with all the orchim and hundreds of bochurim and their teachers who have gathered to daven maariv. It is packed with chassidim, whose faces express feelings of arousal and awe, fearing judgment; all stand as one unity, ready to accept this holy day. A few moments pass, and

the Rebbe arrives, his holy face aflame, expressing an intense מרירות, but simultaneously an inner chayus and simcha shine on his intense countenance. Two opposites expressed at once.

Maariv is davened with great seriousness and hislahavus, and the tefillos rise to shamayim, piercing the heavens. I push myself closer to the Rebbe to hear the tefilla of a tzaddik, and behold the sounds of passionate crying and deep sighing reaches my ears. There is not a word of the Rebbe's davening that is not soaked with a river of tears. I have never heard such soulful crying in my life!

When maariv is over, no one leaves and the shul remains packed with chassidim, standing and listening intently to the tefilla of the tzaddik. The Rebbe still stands in middle of davening, singing a niggun with dveikus, demanding and pleading, and his heart is bursting with intense crying. I look around at the chassidim, all standing in the packed room and listening in silence to every nuance of the Rebbe's tefilla, and many have tears coursing down their faces.

All eyes focused on one point, making sure not to miss a moment. Teshuva from the depths of the heart. I think to myself, "If the only reason for the tzaddik's tefilla is to arouse thousands of Yidden with regret and teshuvah, it is enough."

Late at night, when the Rebbe finishes davening and turns to bencht the congregation with a good, sweet year, his face shines like a malach of Hashem, his eyes radiating light and full of hope. The Rebbe passes through the crowd and wishes each person, "לשנה טובה תכתם ותחתם".

(התמים ח"א ע' קלב)

The Rebbe spoke of how each person should take a lesson to some extent from the Rebbeim's exceptional davening.

(סה"ש תשנ"ב ע' 13, הע' 19)

שופר בLOWING THE

תקיעת The Baal Shem Tov would tell the following mashal to explain שופר: A king had an only son, whom he decided to send to a far country, to increase his knowledge and let him experience different cultures. Loaded with lots of gold and silver, the son left for the distant lands, but on the way, he spent all of it. Arriving there penniless, the people laughed off his claims, not believing that he is a prince, for they had never heard of his father the king. Unable to bear the suffering any longer, the son decided to return to his father's land.

The prince arrived in his homeland, but having been away for so long, he had forgotten the local language. He tried motioning to the people that he was the son of their king, but they mocked him and beat him,

not believing that this tattered fellow was son of their mighty king.

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

Similarly, the King, Hashem, sends a neshama, his prince, down to the world to benefit itself through fulfilling Torah and mitzvos. However, when seeking pleasures, the neshama loses all its wealth and arrives in a place where his father, Hashem, is unknown. Moreover, the neshama forgets the way it was above, and in the long galus, even forgets its 'language'. In desperation, it cries out by blowing the shofar, expressing regret for the past and determination for the future. This cry arouses Hashem's mercy, and He shows his love for His only son and forgives him.

(כתר שם טוב, הוספות קצ"ד [בחדש])

Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berdichev would tell the following mashal: A king once lost his way in the forest and was unable to find his way, until he met a man who directed him out of the forest and back to his palace. The king greatly rewarded him and appointed him as a high minister. A while later, the minister acted rebelliously and was sentenced to death, but before being executed, the king gave him one last wish. The minister asked that both he and the king put on the clothing they had worn when he had rescued the king from the forest. Doing this, reminded the king of his indebtedness to this man, and he called off the execution.

Similarly, we have willingly accepted the Torah from the King, Hashem, when all the other nations refused. Yet, like the minister, we have then done aveiros, an act of rebellion and are therefore fearful on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment. We blow the shofar to remind Hashem of Mattan Torah, when we had accepted the Torah and made Hashem our king, and express our interest to crown Hashem once again. This zechus stands by us, and Hashem forgives all our aveiros and inscribes us immediately for a good life.

(המשך וככה תרל"ז פרק ע')

Before Rosh Hashanah תר"מ the Rebbe Maharash requested his meshareis to relate the following to the chassidim: "That which is written that the blowing of the shofar is like the cry 'Father, Father' the main thing is the 'cry.'" That Rosh Hashanah, the entire village, clamored with remorseful weeping.

(סה"ש תש"ד ע' 4)

The Frierdiker Rebbe related: The Baal Shem Tov would usually conduct together with his talmidim. One year the Baal Shem Tov requested his talmid, the tzaddik Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polnoa to do so, while the Baal Shem Tov himself blew shofar with the simple people and children. The simpletons cried out to Hashem, "Father in heaven, have rachmanus!" and this had the greatest effect of all.

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 6)

ACCEPTING HASHEM'S KINGSHIP

The Frierdiker Rebbe writes: The main avoda of Rosh Hashanah is acceptance of עול מלכות שמים, the yoke of heaven. Therefore, even among great chassidim, their avoda would be: simply saying Tehillim, sleeping as little as possible, and taking care not to indulge in idle

talk. This is similar to a servant whose service to his master leaves him not even one free moment, or 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 other prominent chassidim went in to the Rebbe to ask him to recite an additional maamer for them. The Rebbe answered, "The קהלה is saying Tehillim, and you are requesting Chassidus? It is better to say Tehillim." The Tzemach Tzedek himself was seen saying Tehillim the entire second night as his eyes flowed with tears. Even as he waited to say the maamer on the second day of Yom Tov, he murmured words of Tehillim.

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 10)

Once late in the afternoon on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, the Frierdiker Rebbe went to his father the Rebbe Rashab to hear the maamer. The Rebbe Rashab said to him, "Take advantage of the time; you have another 22 minutes left (before shkiah)." Later, the Rebbe came out late for the saying of the maamer.

(סה"ש תש"ד ע' 11)

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah תש"ה, some chassidim wanted to enter where the Frierdiker Rebbe was having his Yom Tov seuda. The Frierdiker Rebbe was not satisfied with this and said, "What pity, at this time you can add millions of words to the 'sefirah of malchus.'" Immediately, the chassidim went out and started saying Tehillim out loud.

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 10)

The chassid and gaon Reb Yossel (uncle of the Tzemach Tzedek) was once in a distant city for Rosh Hashanah, and later complained, "Their davening distracts me. All their tefillos are only for physical needs."

One of the elder chassidim recounted: "When I was in Russia, the authorities were once after me, and I was forced to flee and wander through the country. My wanderings continued for several years, and I had the opportunity to daven on the Yomim Noraim in different shuls. I noticed an interesting difference: In most shuls, they would cry out with most feeling by the words ותשובה ותפלה וצדקה מעבירין את 'רוע הגזרה', being concerned for their welfare for the upcoming year; however, in the chassidische shuls they would cry louder by the words 'ואתה הוא מלך', recognizing and accepting Hashem's kingship."

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soleveitchik related: "When I learned in cheder in the village of Chaslavitch, my melamed, a chabad chossid, would radiate an unaccustomed feeling and joy on the day before Rosh Hashanah. We students were very amazed at this, until he explained, "Do you know what tomorrow evening is? It will be Rosh Hashanah, and among chassidim the night of Rosh Hashanah is called 'Coronation Night', when we place a crown on the head of Hashem. And do you know who places the crown? Every single Yid: Yankel the tailor, and Berel the shoemaker..."

(מפי השמועה)

The Tzemach Tzedek said: When the two malochim who escort every Yid hear the Yidden bentching each other לטובה לשנה טובה וחתימה טובה ומתוקה, with purity of heart, they go above to give a favorable report and insist on a good, sweet year.

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 1)