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RABBI YITZI'S  
**DIVREI  
TORAH**

**ROSH HASHANA EDITION**

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## A Mother's Tears

Dear friends,

I wrote this letter to Dina, after a long and difficult year. She thought that I should publish it because it is a letter/dvar Torah. Perhaps other women will draw strength from it as well.

Have a happy and sweet year!

~

Dear Dina my heart of gold,

This year has been difficult, your tears didn't go unnoticed. I'm sure the tears I saw were only the tip of the iceberg. How many were shared with your pillow, how many were written into your blog and how many have you held back.

Who can understand the heart of a Jewish mother? It is like you have a sixth sense, only Jewish women have it. It is a closeness to Hashem, as if you can sense His sadness as well. Sometimes you sense His joy.

This is talked about in the last mishnah in Taanis that on Yom Kippur, the girls would go dancing in the vineyards, just like Tu B'Av. What was special about those times? They are times of forgiveness of sins, and the girls could sense Hashem's joy, which caused them to well with joy, this caused them to go out and dance.

Now, if women can sense Hashem's joy, it would follow that they sense His sadness as well. And so you cry even more.

I think the deepest crying is for the children. I think this is why you identify so strongly with the Haftora of the second day of Rosh Hashanah. Rochel is crying for her children and there is nothing to console her. It just seems endless, with no reprieve in sight. So much work, so much selfless giving and giving, with no gain, no reward.

The Haftora continues. Hashem says, you can stop crying, there is reward for your work. There is hope, the children will return to their borders. Moshiach is coming and it's your work, your tears, your love and your joy that brought him.

Your suffering is not in vain. You will see the fruits of your hard work and you will be honored. I don't know why Hashem chose us, but he did. We, like Rochel, won't give up and we won't let him down.

In this week's parsha we read the words from Moshe to Yehoshua "chazak v'ematz", be strong and courageous. Perhaps it is our bitachon, simcha and emunah that will bring an end to this dark galus.

I am with you,

Your Yosef Yitzchak

This article is dedicated  
Lizechus Avionam Ben Varda Faiga Bluma for a Shnas Brocho  
Vihatzlocho Bigashmiyus Veruchniyus.

~

## A Cry From The Depths Of Our Souls

About Rosh Hashanah, the Mishnah<sup>1</sup> says, “The mitzvah of the day is with the shofar.”

The Baal Shem Tov explains shofar with a parable. It is like a child that cries out, “father father save me.”<sup>2</sup>

The Rebbes of Chabad made it known<sup>3</sup> that the main thing is not the content of the cry, “father father save me,” but rather the cry itself.<sup>4</sup>

Being that we are all different, the content of our cries are different, but each of us cry out to Hashem. For one the cry from the depths of his soul is audible, for another it is silent. But it is from the depths of his soul that he cries.

This is what the sounds of the shofar are all about, a cry from the depths of our souls. And that is what breaks through the gates of heaven and reaches Hashem, our father.

Then there is the parable of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev. There was a boy that wanted an apple, but his father didn’t want to give it to him. The clever boy quickly said the blessing over fruits and his father had to give it to him.

Sometimes a father doesn’t want to give. Then there are times that the father does want to give, and the only reason he is denying his child what he wants, is because he wants to bring

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1 Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 26b.

2 Found in Hemshech Vechacha 5637 par. 70.

3 This was told over by the 6th Rebbe of Chabad, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, brought in Lekutei Sichos vol 2 pp. 405-406.

4 See Sefer Hamaamarim Kuntreisim volume 2 p. 642.

out something more from the child, to see how clever he is. Will he figure out a way to get it?

In our case, Hashem wants to give. As the expression found in the Talmud goes, “more than the calf wants to suckle, the cow wants to nurse.”<sup>5</sup> The same idea is said regarding the One above, the verse says, “for the work of your hands, He longs.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, Hashem wants us to serve Him. He therefore wants to give us what we need to serve Him.

This is why in the Rosh Hashanah Musaf prayer, at the culmination of the verses of shofar, we conclude with the blessing, “Blessed are You Hashem our G-d, Who hears the sound of the terua (the sound of the shofar) of Your nation Israel with compassion.”

When it comes to saying a blessing with Hashem’s name, the rule is that if there is any doubt, we don’t say the blessing, because we do not want to say His Name in vain. Yet here we say, “Who hears the sound of the terua of Your nation Israel,” and not only that, but He hears it “with compassion.” Why are we so certain?

The Men of the Great Assembly, at the beginning of the Second Temple era, were the ones who authored our prayers. They were comprised of 120 Tzadikim of which many were prophets. So they were in the position to know, they were not in doubt. They therefore ruled that we should say this blessing with Hashem’s name, because it is absolutely certain that Hashem hears our terua, the cry from the depths of our souls, and that He hears it with compassion. Meaning, that He will grant us all our needs, especially nachas, health and sustenance.

The central theme of Rosh Hashanah is twofold. First we reach up to Hashem, accepting Him as our King, accepting the yoke of His dominion. And then He in turn, so to speak, accepts upon Himself all the blessings he said He would give us in parshat Bechukotai<sup>7</sup>,

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5 Pesachim 112a.

6 Job 14:15.

7 Leviticus 26:4.

“And I will give your rain in their time...”<sup>8</sup>

This year, when we sound the shofar, the cry from the depths of our souls, Hashem will surely grant us what we need, including nachas from our children, good health and abundant sustenance. Which is all included in the traditional Rosh Hashanah blessing, that we wish everyone with “a good and sweet year.” May he also grant us the coming of Moshiach. The time has come.

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8 Lekutei Sichos vol 2 pp. 405-407.

Dedicated By Dr. Ezra and Lauren Kest

In honor of our children who teach us how to love, listen and be heard. They should be blessed to find, see and recognize their zivugim at the right time and always listen well, be heard and feel listened to.

~

## How Shofar Draws The Blessings For A Sweet Year

On Rosh Hashanah, in the musaf prayer, we hear the shofar blowing three times. Once with the verses and the blessing of kingship, a second time with the verses and the blessing of remembrance, and a third time with the verses and the blessing of shofar.

The Talmud cites a Braisa that says, “The shofar blasts and the blessings of Rosh Hashanah... Are dependent on one another. What is the reason? Raba says that Hashem says, ‘Say before Me on Rosh Hashanah verses of kingship, remembrance, and shofar. Verses of kingship, so that you will make Me King over you, verses of remembrance, so that good memories of you will come to Me, and with what (will you raise the verses before Me)? With the (verses and the blasts of the) shofar.’”

On Rosh Hashanah there are two main themes that are intertwined. First we ask Hashem to be King over us, we coronate Him as our King, second is that we are accepted as His subjects, meaning that we will do His will and He will bestow upon us His goodness, that our needs are met and more. And this all happens in the musaf prayer.

How does this work? And why is it that shofar is what makes it happen?

To explain this, there are two parables.

The first parable is from the Baal Shem Tov:

There was a king who had an only son. The prince was well educated and was the apple of his father’s eye. The King decided



that it was a good idea for the prince to travel to foreign countries to learn and absorb new knowledge and cultures.

The king gave his son officers, servants and a lot of money, so that he would be able to travel to distant countries and islands, to become more than he could have ever been had he stayed in his father's house.

Much time passed, all his wealth and supplies were used up because of the pampered lifestyle he was used to; he was accustomed to always indulging his every whim. He eventually sold everything that he had and found himself in a distant land where no one even knew who his father was at all.

This caused him great anguish. He yearned to return to his father's country. Because so much time had elapsed, he even forgot his native tongue; what could he do in his own country without knowing his own language?!

When he came back to his country, he began to gesture and signal that he was their king's son. He came to the courtyard of the king and continued gesturing that he was the prince, but they didn't recognize him at all, they ridiculed him.

He began to cry in a loud voice, hoping that the king would recognize it. When the king heard his voice, he exclaimed "Isn't that the voice of my son crying out in desperation?" The love for his son was evoked, and he embraced and kissed his son.

The analogy is easily understood. The Jewish people are called the sons of Hashem. Just as the prince left the palace to learn and grow, so too, the neshama accomplishes and grows by doing mitzvos down here and reaches higher heights than it did before it descended to earth.

Alas, because of the body's self-love and indulgences, the neshama can end up in a distant place where even his own father isn't recognized, nor his own language.

Until he returns and cries out in a primal, simple voice. And this is what the cry of the shofar is—a cry from the depths of the heart,

deeply regretting everything that he did and resolving to listen to the voice of his father. This cry elicits from the King of Kings a deep love for his “only son” and he forgives him for all he’s done in the past.

This is what the verses and the blessing of kingship accomplishes, but it is the sound of the shofar, a primal cry from the depths of our hearts that drives it home to the essence of Hashem, He accepts and He is our King for the new year.

The second parable is from Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev:

A King once traveled through a big forest, to the depths of the forest, where he could no longer find the route home.

He noticed some villagers and asked them for directions. They, of course, didn’t recognize the King, and didn’t know what to answer because they never knew the route to the palace.

He eventually found a wise man and asked him for directions. The wise man recognized that this was the king, and was shaken. He immediately fulfilled the king’s wish by pointing him in the right direction. Because of his great wisdom, he knew the correct path to the palace and was able to guide the king back to his throne.

The man found favor in the king’s eyes.

Time passed and this same man sinned against the king and angered him. The king commanded his highest officers to judge this man as those who commit treason are judged.

The man was extremely pained knowing that he was doomed to harsh judgment for sinning against the king. He fell before the king and pleaded for one final request. He wanted to be dressed in the original clothes that he was wearing when he guided the king from the forest and back to his palace; and the king shall, as well, wear the same clothes he wore on that day.

The king obliged. When both the king and the man were dressed in the garments from the day they met in the forest,

the king remembered the great kindness he displayed for the king by guiding him back to his palace and throne. This aroused compassion and benevolence within the king to forgive the sins of the man and return him to his post.

This is an analogy for Hashem and the Jewish people. At the time of the Giving of the Torah, Hashem approached all the nations of the world, but they didn't accept the Torah. We, the Jewish people, accepted the Torah with happiness and deep joy to the extent that we immediately said "Naaseh V'Nishma" (we will do and then we will understand). We accepted Hashem as our King and committed to fulfilling the mitzvos and laws of the Torah.

Now, however, we sinned and rebelled against the king. Therefore we blow the shofar, the same "clothing we wore" at the Giving of the Torah. (The sound of the shofar was heard at the Giving of the Torah, so it serves) as a reminder that we accepted the Torah and we coronate Hashem as king with this same shofar. Through this, Hashem forgives us for all our wrongdoings and immediately inscribes us for a good life.

This is what the verses and the blessing of remembrance accomplishes, but again, it is the sound of the shofar, the reminder of how when no one would accept the Torah, we accepted the Torah and the mission. His compassion and benevolence is aroused, He accepts us as His subjects for the new year and He grants us our needs and more for the new year.

There is a question: What is it that actually drives it home to the essence of Hashem, is it the verses or the blasts of the shofar? Therefore we do both.

On a deeper level, there are two aspects of the shofar, one is accomplished by the verses and the other by blasts.

The blasts of the shofar are a mitzvah and have the power of a mitzvah, which is Hashem's will, His essence, therefore they reach His essence.

Reciting the verses is Torah study, Torah is light, which reveals and has the power to draw down the accomplishments of the

shofar into reality. And there is an advantage that Torah study has over mitzvos, it reaches the highest levels. Therefore there is an advantage that the reciting of the verses of shofar has over the actual blasts of the shofar. As the Rebbe Rashab says, “The true revelation that will be in the time of Moshiach at the highest level... Is drawn down now, on Rosh Hashanah, by saying the verses of shofar.”

Therefore, on Rosh Hashanah that falls on Shabbos, when we don't blow the shofar, we suffice with reciting the verses of shofar, because it accomplishes the same thing, if not more.

Through shofar we accomplish the essence of Rosh Hashanah, we choose Hashem, and He chooses us, and He grants us a sweet and happy year.

May we all be written and sealed in the book of life for a happy and sweet new year, with good health and happiness, nachas and shalom bayis, abundance and success. And may we merit to see the coming of Moshiach and an end to this dark and bitter exile. May he come soon. The time has come.<sup>1</sup>

I would like to thank Chana Gurevitch for her help translating the two parables.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Lekutei Sichos vol 34 pp. 180-186.

## Rachel's Sacrifice

The Haftora for the second day of Rosh Hashanah is all about the redemption. How we will return, how wonderful it will be, why we will merit redemption, and how much Hashem loves us.

At the core of its message, is repentance and ultimate sacrifice, that is its connection to Rosh Hashanah.

The Haftora opens with Hashem saying that He found favor in us when we were in the desert, and he led us to rest in Israel. How we will return there, how wonderful things will be, and that we will return as a vast assembly.

In what merit will we return? In the merit of teshuva, returning to Hashem through prayer and supplication. As the verse says, "They will come weeping, with supplications I will lead them." The power of our teshuva will bring an end to this exile, and it is teshuva that is central to the High Holidays, as the Ten days from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur, are called The Ten Days of Teshuva.

Hashem now addresses the world, and tells them that He will redeem us and that they won't be able to take advantage of us any more. Then Hashem says the most amazing thing, He says, "I will turn their mourning into joy." He doesn't say that He will end our mourning, rather, He will turn our mourning into joy. This means that the actual suffering and pain of the exile will be transformed into joy. The more the suffering in exile, the greater the joy when Moshiach comes.

The Haftora continues, "So says Hashem, 'a voice is heard on high, bitter weeping, Rachel is crying for her children...'" Her cries are so powerful, that Hashem gives in to her, He tells her that she doesn't have to cry any more, "your children will return to their border."

It is certain that our patriarchs, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and our other matriarchs, Sarah, Rivka and Leah are crying for us as well. Why are only Rachel's cries heard? Why is she able

to break through, while the others could not?

It is because of her great sacrifice. What was her sacrifice?

Many of you know the story. When Yaakov and Rachel were to be married, Yaakov suspected that the unscrupulous Lavan, his future father in law, would put his older daughter, Leah, under the veil. So he and Rachel prepared a secret signal for her to show, so that he would know that it was really her. When Lavan made the switch, Rachel realized how embarrassed Leah would be if she was found out, so she gave her the secret signal. By giving her the signal, she sacrificed everything. First she gave away the man she loved, second, had she married him that day, she would have possibly been his only wife and the mother of all the tribes. She also gave up the ability to be with Yaakov, which was not only a physical sacrifice, but a spiritual loss as well, because Yaakov was such a holy man.

By giving the signal to her sister, she gave up everything and she didn't hold back the signal from her because of jealousy. This is her argument to Hashem, this is what she is crying for her children. If I, a mere mortal, was not jealous of my sister, and gave her the secret signal, then Hashem, who doesn't have jealousy, because He is way beyond that, should not be jealous that the Jewish people served false gods. And with this cry, she accomplishes what no one else could, that her children will return to their border.

Then, as He does throughout the Haftora, Hashem uses Ephraim to mean the Jewish people. Why? First, because he was the main tribe of Yosef, who was the first Jew forced into exile. Second, because Ephraim was born in exile, in Egypt, before the Jewish people came down there. Third, because the tribe of Ephraim was the leader of the ten northern tribes, who were sent into exile first, during the First Temple era.

Hashem says, "Isn't Ephraim my beloved son? Isn't he a precious child?... I surely will have compassion on him, says G-d." This beloved verse is part of the Rosh Hashanah liturgy, it is always said in a beautiful melodic tune, and the congregation usually joins in. In this verse Hashem describes his love and affection

for us, and that when He thinks of us, He is moved.

Hashem loves us so much, and he will have compassion and redeem us. The message here for Rosh Hashanah, is that through teshuva and true sacrifice we can bring Moshiach.

With all this said, we have all sacrificed enough already. May Hashem show His love for us, and send Moshiach right away.

Have a happy and sweet year.

In honor of my wife Dina, whose daily sacrifices for me and the family is what keeps us together and strong. I don't know what we would do without her.

## I Chose To Live, So Should You

It is now over 5 years since Hashem gifted me with ALS. But this week we celebrated a milestone, it is 3 years since I had a tracheostomy.

It was the day after Rosh Hashanah, I had been using a machine called a bipap to help me breathe, still I seemed to be fading. My wife Dina took me to the hospital, where I was diagnosed with pneumonia, and my oxygen level was dangerously low.

It was at that point, that I was given the choice to have the tracheostomy and live, or not and put an end to the suffering and difficulties. Legally and halachically it was my choice, with Dina's support, I chose to live.

The simple fact is, that if I would not have had it then, I wouldn't be here today and possibly wouldn't have lived through the week.

Another fact is, that the true sacrifice in this story, is my wife's, she is the one who has the brunt of the hardships, taking care of me and the family with love and tears. She has to be mother, father, wife, caretaker, sometimes nurse and a multitude of other titles. I can't begin to imagine how much she suffers, not having a normal husband, to do what husbands do for their wives.

All I am able to do is listen and write to her, but she has given me a life and the ability to watch my children grow up. With her support and womanly cleverness, she pushes me to be a better father, to study Torah more and more, and to write. I owe it all to her.

Being able to see my children grow is one of the greatest pleasures. It is incredible that with all the hardships, they found a way to function as normal and healthy kids should. And I get to see them, talk to them, and experience their personalities and talents.



Over the past five years, we were blessed to see amazing kindness from all over the world. And especially the Los Angeles community. But no one more than the five exceptional people who have taken on the responsibility of taking care of me and my family. We call them the fantastic five, they started the Hurwitz Family Fund, and in over five years, they haven't wavered. They are truly amazing.

After having the tracheostomy, I lost the use of my right hand, and with that went my ability to communicate. Before that I would type on an iPhone for communication and writing blog posts. For those 9 days in the hospital, I couldn't communicate and I just let go and put my trust in Hashem, and my wife made sure I was taken care of.

I was in recovery in the ICU, when I began to understand the importance of bikur cholim, visiting the sick. Even though I wasn't able to communicate, I felt uplifted with every visit, whether it was a rabbi or lay person, man or woman.

My children being too young to enter the ICU, to my pleasure, snuck in, I can't begin to tell you how much I enjoyed seeing them.

As Yom Kippur was approaching, we wondered what kind of holiday we would have in the hospital. The thought sounded grim, but we were in for a surprise.

Just before Yom Kippur, a woman was ushered into the room right next to mine. Her children were with her and when it came time for davening, they came to my room and with the most melodic voices they sang the davening, it was truly uplifting.

Over Yom Kippur, we had several visitors that walked to the hospital to see us. All and all, that Yom Kippur was one of our most memorable ones.

I am blessed to live at a time when there are technologies that keep me alive such as the ventilator that breathes for me, and the incredible computer that reads my eye movements, so I can communicate.

While life is full of difficulties, pain and suffering, there is so much to be grateful for. While I understand the hardships, I choose to focus on the positive parts of my life and that keeps me going. There is my wife, my children, family, friends and you. I have the opportunity to learn and teach Torah. There is the hope that in the future a cure will be found or perhaps a miracle even sooner.

Each of us has so much good in our lives, even within the suffering and difficulties there is so much good to be found. Focus on the positive in your life now, see all the love that is around you, there is so much you can do, and so much more you can give.

May you have a good and sweet year, and may Moshiach come and put an end to all the suffering. The time has come.



[YitziHurwitz.blogspot.com](http://YitziHurwitz.blogspot.com)  
[HurwitzFamilyFund.com](http://HurwitzFamilyFund.com)