
THE WEISS EDITION

ראש השנה

Rosh Hashena



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Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



Lightpoints

לזכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת הרה"ג ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט התשפ"ב

תנצב"ה



ראש השנה *Rosh Hashena*

מְלוֹךְ עַל הָעוֹלָם כָּל יְמֵי בְּכֻבּוֹדָךְ (תפילות ראש השנה)

Reign over the entire universe in Your glory.

(Rosh Hashanah Liturgy)

Head of the Year

Our heads are home to our highest faculties, particularly in the brain. In fact, our lower faculties too and the life-force found in all other parts of our bodies stem from within the brain as well. Moreover, not only is the brain the general source of the vitality found throughout the body, but even as the other limbs operate individually, the brain controls and directs their functionality.

All these aspects of the brain can be found in the inner theme of the holiday of Rosh Hashanah, which can be translated literally as “the *Head* of the Year.”

First and foremost, the theme of Rosh Hashanah as expressed repeatedly in its prayers and rituals is our request that G-d “reign over the entire universe”—we declare our desire to be G-d’s subjects and we crown Him as our King. Our internal

work to truly crown G-d as our King precedes any other act of Divine worship, because only after evoking G-d's desire to reign over us is there significance to maintaining our relationship with Him and fulfilling His will and commands. This essential service of Rosh Hashanah, a form of Divine worship that utterly transcends our everyday worship, is comparable to the supreme faculties and functions that set the head apart from the rest of the body.

The second theme of Rosh Hashanah is its status as one of the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, the Ten Days of Repentance that extend from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. Through genuine remorse and firm resolve to abandon behaviors that are not in keeping with G-d's will, we rectify the harm caused by our past transgressions and we restore our attachment to Him. In a certain sense, the yearning and devotion that is expressed in *teshuvah* touches a chord even greater than that of abiding by the specific commandments (and can therefore bring us atonement for transgressing them). Still, *teshuvah* is premised on our duty to observe the commandments and serves to repair the harm caused by their transgression. Relative to the specific *mitzvos* incumbent upon a Jew, *teshuvah* is not entirely in a league of its own; it is comparable to the vitality of the individual faculties of the body as they exist in a higher form within the brain.

Finally, it is the resolutions we take on Rosh Hashanah to act on these profound emotions and experiences that ensure our practical observance of G-d's commandments in our day-to-day lives throughout the year. These firm commitments imbued with the unique Rosh Hashanah resolve are like the brain and nervous system *directing* the functions of the entire body.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 4, pp. 1144-1146

וְחָנָה לֹא עָלָתָה בִּי אִמְרָה לְאִשָּׁה עַד
יִגְמַל הַנֶּעַר וְיָבִיאָתִי (שמואל א', א, כב)

*But Chana did not go up, for she said to her husband,
“Until the child is weaned, then I shall bring him.”*

(I Shmuel 1:22)

Balancing Motherhood with Prophecy

Chana was one of seven women in history to whom G-d gave the power of prophecy.¹ In the Haftorah of Rosh Hashanah, we read how this prophetess prayed and begged G-d to grant her a child, vowing to devote her child to G-d's service. Indeed, after years of childlessness, Chana gave birth to Shmuel. When Shmuel was weaned, Chana made good on her vow and brought him to the Mishkan, where she entrusted him in the care of Eli, the High Priest. The verse makes special note, however, that until Chana weaned Shmuel she declined to join her husband Elkanah on his yearly pilgrimage to the Mishkan.

The awesome experience of being in the Temple during the holidays is described by our Sages: “Just as G-d comes to see [the attendees], so too does He come to be seen.”² Meaning, that to varying degrees, G-d would be “seen”—sensed and perceived—by everyone in attendance at the Mishkan during the holidays. This was certainly an opportunity not to be missed, especially for a prophetess. Arguably, this ex-

1. Megilah 14a.

2. Chagigah 2a

perience could also enhance the education that Chana would ultimately provide her child.

Yet, Chana chose not to make the pilgrimage until Shmuel was older.³ Chana believed that, ultimately, her child would gain most by being cared for and raised by his mother, with her undivided attention. This, argued Chana, outweighed even the benefits of “seeing” G-d in the Mishkan—even though she would appreciate those revelations as only a prophetess can.

Chana’s story serves as an example for all times. Trumping any other ambition or pursuit, a mother’s highest aspiration should be to nurture her children. To every degree possible, a mother should direct her energies toward raising a family of children devoted to G-d—as only a mother can.

—*Sichos Kodesh 5734, vol. 1, pp. 25-29*

3. Chana’s husband was a wealthy man, as described in the Midrash, and certainly had the means to bring along aides to help with Shmuel’s care during the trip. Alternatively, if Chana was concerned about the toll that the journey could take on such a young child, she could have hired someone to look after Shmuel at home while she traveled.

אַתֶּם נֹצְבִים הַיּוֹם מִלְּפָנַי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם רְאִשֵׁיכֶם
 שְׂבִיטֵיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם וְשֹׁטְרֵיכֶם כָּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל: טַפְּכֶם
 נָשִׁיכֶם וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶרֶב מַחֲנֶיךָ מִחֹטֵב עֵצִיד עַד שֹׁאֵב
 מִיַּמֶּיךָ: לְעִבְרְךָ בְּבֵרִית ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ... (דברים כט, ט-יא)

You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d: the leaders of your tribes, your elders and your officers, every man of Israel; your young children, your women, and your convert who is within your camp, your woodcutters and your water-drawers, so that you may enter the covenant of Hashem your G-d.

(Devarim 29:9-11)

The Pact

Every year we read Parshas Nitzavim on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. Implied is that Parshas Nitzavim addresses the themes of Rosh Hashanah, and that reading it enables us to experience the holiday properly.

In the first verses, we read that the entire Jewish nation assembled to enter a covenant with G-d. The Torah mentions specifically that from the leaders to the water-drawers, all of Israel stood united as one—“all of you.”

What is the purpose of a covenant? If two friends are concerned that their relationship might sour at some point, they may enter into a covenant—a pact to remain loyal to each other forever, even if future events or discoveries about one another cause them to lose favor in each other's eyes.

This, essentially, is the theme of Rosh Hashanah: a renewal of the covenant between G-d and the Jewish people. On Rosh Hashanah, when our love for G-d is strong (after our heartfelt *teshuvah* during the month of Elul), we commit ourselves to

G-d unconditionally. We pray that G-d will enter this covenant with us, committing Himself to us unconditionally, even if later in the year our love may not be as obvious.

The covenant of Rosh Hashanah requires, however, that all members of the Jewish nation unite as one, just as the Jewish people did—men, women and children, from the elders to the converts—in Parshas Nitzavim. For in order to evoke G-d's unconditional commitment to us, we too must behave in a manner that transcends any reason or conditions. We do this by showing our sincere love and respect for all of our fellow Jews, despite our understandable differences.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 2, pp. 399-400

בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִכָּתְבוּן (תפילת מוסף דר"ה)

On Rosh Hashanah they will be inscribed . . .

(Musaf of Rosh Hashanah)

Sensitive Time

Rosh Hashanah marks the start of the new Jewish year. Yet, the name of this holiday in Jewish tradition is Rosh Hashanah, which does not mean “the start of the year,” but “the *head* of the year.” According to Chassidus, this name demonstrates that the vitality of all the days of the coming year is contained within the day of Rosh Hashanah, like the life force of the entire body that is contained within the brain. And just as the brain diffuses vitality to all the limbs and organs of the body, so too does each day of the coming year derive vitality from Rosh Hashanah.

This idea highlights the critical value and significance of every hour and minute of the two days of Rosh Hashanah. Not only are these days greater than all others in their quantitative significance, considering that the value of these 48 hours is multiplied by the thousands of hours whose value is contained in them, they are also greater qualitatively. Just as the brain-matter is more sensitive than the rest of the body, so too is the time on Rosh Hashanah the most sensitive and critical of the entire year.

We are therefore cautioned to utilize every moment of this holiday carefully. In the words of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe:

Throughout both days of Rosh Hashanah, from an hour before Minchah on the eve of Rosh Hashanah until Maariv at

*its conclusion, everyone . . . should be diligent in the reading of Tehillim night and day. For during these two days one must vigilantly abstain from mundane conversation to the utmost. One should sleep less than usual, intensify his devotion in prayer and supplication from the depths of the heart, and recite Tehillim at every free moment.*⁴

—*Toras Menachem*, vol. 1, p. 221

4. See Addendum to *Tehillim Ohel Yosef Yitzchak*, p. 205.



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