

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
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life

LESSONS

THE OUTSIDE VIEW

Rav Reuven Feinstein once received an effusive letter from a non-Jew praising the *bachurim* of his yeshivah for their respect, a testament to the power of a *yeshivah bachur* to create *kiddush Hashem*.

Rabbi Feinstein,

I was so impressed with the Staten Island Yeshiva of which you are the head that I must write this email to you. In February of last year, I drove a friend of mine, Rabbi Eli Beane, from Lakewood, NJ to upper Staten Island for knee therapy. Rabbi Beane needed to say afternoon prayers and determined that your yeshivah was a convenient place. It was cold and snowy. I helped him up the steps and waited in the hallway. I could not help but be in awe of the dress code, the demeanor and the courtesy, shown to me, a stranger and a non-Jew.

*I live in a non-Jewish world, in which people are low in respect for teachers, parents and themselves... I am not a predictor of the future but without a belief in an Almighty and a judgment we must face, the non-Jews that I live among are doomed—and they don't know it or couldn't care less. ... Rabbi Beane remarked to me that without a high degree of morality, the world sinks into cannibalism and savagery. The only hope I see is the islands of *bachurim* studying Torah and Talmud, living its commandments and influencing others.*

May the Almighty bless you, the yeshivah, the rabbis and your students. May your yeshivah be an example of what humanity should be!

Shalom,

Gerry Mullen. 

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OF THE WEEK

SPIRITUAL SUMMONS

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

The Yamim Tovim in Nissan and Sivan remind us of the Divine source of all we have: freedom, Land, Law—as well as what these elements produce: the prosperity of the community.

Pesach with its Omer and Shavuot with its two loaves are the constitution festivals of the Jewish nation. Tishrei, however, is a month of contemplation and introspection.

In Tishrei, we examine our relationship with these elements of our prosperity, and we ascend to the heights of purity and truth, for only through them can the blessings of life be realized.

Rosh Hashanah does not commemorate gifts received from Hashem. Rather, it calls us to work on ourselves. Its special *mitzvos* are *shabbason*, refraining from activity that alters the world and shapes our future; and *zichron teruah*.

Teruah is familiar to us from *yovel*: a signal for people and property to be freed from outside ownership and returned to the mission assigned to them

continued on reverse side

powerful
PRAYER 

U'KESHARTAM L'OS:
PURE INTENTIONS

Before a Jewish man puts on the tefillin, he recites a beautiful paragraph, *Hineni Mechavein*, about what they remind him of: of Hashem's Oneness, His outstretched arm, and all the miracles He did for us when He took us out of *Mitzrayim*.

He accepts upon himself the intention to use the power of his arms, all of his physical capability and actions, and the desires of his heart, in service of Hashem.

Finally, he commits to keep his thoughts pure and holy, always directed above. 

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom

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THE WONDER OF RETURN

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

This year, we are reading Parshas Nitzavim on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah—how timely! The last three sections of the *parsha* all deal with themes very relevant to Rosh Hashanah: the long-awaited era of Mashiach, the mitzvah of *teshuvah*, and one of our greatest gifts from Hashem: the ability to choose freely between good and evil.

Chazal tell us in the name of Hashem, “On Rosh Hashanah, recite statements of kingship, to accept Me as king over you.” The essence of Rosh Hashanah is our *kabbalas ol malchus shamayim*. Once Mashiach comes, we will finally experience the ultimate kingship of Hashem. Then the world will be filled with knowledge of Him, everyone will recognize Him, and all evil will cease.

A glance at the *tefillos* of Rosh Hashanah reveal this as a theme of the day. “*Elokeinu v’elokei avoseinu*—reign over the entire world in Your glory.” “Place fear of You upon all Your handiwork, and Your awe upon all Your creations.” Those who are truly loyal to their king long to see his dominion extend far and wide.

And what does it mean to be a loyal subject? It means obedience to the laws and decrees of our king. If we have strayed, the solution follows immediately: there is a mitzvah to do *teshuvah*. From the beginning of time, Hashem has given people the opportunity to correct their mistakes. Even in a person’s last moments, his repentance will still be accepted.

When the Rambam discusses free will, he concludes his explanation—and then immediately remarks that just as we have the ability to make the wrong choices, we have total free will to do *teshuvah*, and no one and nothing stands in our way if we are sincere. Not only that, but Hashem extends His hand, so to speak, to help all those who genuinely seek to return.

Throughout the era of the Neviim, the prophets pleaded with the people to do *teshuvah*, to make themselves worthy of all the good that Hashem wished to give them. Let us not pass up this gift!

A *kesiva v’chasima tova* to all. 🕯

by Hashem. It is a call for far-reaching change in existing social relationships of men, a call to restore what was ordained by Hashem.

It is in the Name of Hashem, the sole Master of men and property, that the *teruah* calls for freedom. Hence, what produces the *teruah* is not the man-made trumpet, but the *shofar*, created by Hashem.

The *teruah* of Rosh Hashanah is also described as *bashofar*, sounded in the name of Hashem. And it has a similar message. Whereas the *teruah shel yovel* affects the relationship of property and owners, *teruah shel Rosh Hashanah* affects the moral relationship of man and G-d. It summons us to a moral *yovel*. It calls upon us to return to Hashem and to spiritual freedom, to recover all the spiritual assets that were once ours but which we have since lost through our sins.

Thus, it is also a signal for spiritual escape, to journey forth and give up the old ways that we have grown fond of but are unacceptable to Hashem.

It calls us to a moral struggle against the enemy of our spiritual welfare, and assures us that Hashem will support us in our fight:

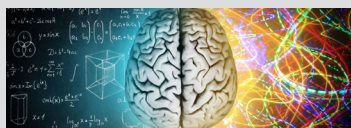
*venizkartem lifnei Hashem Elokeichem,
v’noshatem mei’oyveichem.* 🕯

Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt”l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.



wonder WORLD

MIND OVER MATTER



Can the brain change its ways?

In Parshas Nitzavim, Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael that no matter how far they stray, they can always return. We can always change, and we see this physically in the way our brains work. For a long time, people thought the brain was fixed, like a machine. But now we know that it’s more like a living network. Every time you learn something new or break a habit, your brain forms or strengthens connections between nerve cells. When we do *teshuvah*, changing our actions, thoughts, or speech, we’re also rewiring the brain. *Mitzvah goreres mitzvah*—good habits create stronger “paths,” making it easier to repeat those actions. Bad habits can fade if we stop doing them. Hashem designed our brains for *teshuvah*. 🕯

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