

GROWTH

7th Edition
By Michael Sionov
BS"D

At The

~~YOM TOV~~

~~SHABBAT TABLE~~

ROSH HASHANAH

My Father

Rosh Hashanah is the moment where a Jew looks up to G-d and says: "I owe you a lot. You gave me a life, You gave me breath, You put me as a part of Your Nation." On the first night of the year, you sit down, and may wonder, "What are we doing? What are we having a meal for? Why are we happy for what's happening here? We're making 'Yehi Ratzons' about how good the year is going to be? We didn't even do anything yet!" In truth, Chazal want us to realize that we're not facing some big, bad judge hoping for punishment. The G-d we're looking at is a G-d Who is malei rachamim, Who is full of mercy. All He wants to do is give you a good year. All He wants to do is give you berachah and shefa. All He wants is for you to be great. When you turn to HaKadosh Baruch Hu on Rosh Hashanah and look up and say, "I believe with every fiber of my being that You love me and You'll take care of me. You're not a judge; You're my Dad! All You want to do is take care of me!" - When a person has that much emuna and bitachon in Hashem, then it is THAT emuna and THAT bitachon that moves Hashem from personifying din and judgment to personifying rachamim and mercy. (Charlie Harary)

A Deeper Look Into The Shofar

The Rambam writes by Pesach (Hilchot Chametz/Matzah 6:3) that if one ate matzah, but without *kavanah* / intent to fulfill the mitzvah of doing so, e.g. where he was forced to eat it – he is still *yotzei* and has nonetheless fulfilled his obligation. This is because, as the famous rule dictates, *kavanah* isn't technically mandatory in order to fulfill a mitzvah.

The question arises, though, when contrasting this with the Rambam's words by Hilchot Shofar (2:4): "If one blows the Shofar just for practice, he hasn't fulfilled his obligation... likewise, if one listening to this shofar blowing had intent to be *yotzei* while the one blowing himself didn't have *kavanah*, they haven't fulfilled their obligation." Here, the Rambam seems to rule that mitzvot do mandate *kavanah* in order to be *yotzei*, which contradicts his ruling given above by matzah!

The Sefer "Ratz KaTzvi" offers an insight. Really, the *halachah* generally is that mitzvot don't technically require *kavanah* in order to fulfill them, which is in line with what the Rambam wrote regarding matzah. However, the mitzvah of Shofar is unique. The whole concept behind blowing the Shofar is that it's a method and means of *kabalat ol malchut Shamayim*, of accepting upon ourselves the yoke of Hashem's kingship (see Rosh Hashanah 16a). As is apparent, one cannot accomplish accepting *ol malchut Shamayim* upon oneself without cognition! Thus, when the Rambam wrote that *kavanah* is a prerequisite towards fulfilling the mitzvah of Shofar, it wasn't stemming from the discussion of whether "*mitzvot require kavanah or not.*" Rather, *kavanah* and awareness is needed by Shofar in order to properly accept *ol malchut Shamayim*, which is what the mitzvah is all about. (Sefer Iyun HaMoadim)

As we listen attentively to the Shofar blasts this Rosh Hashanah, let us prepare ourselves with the right mindset as we eagerly crown our Father, our King.

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Rachamim Ben Shifra Yitzchak Ben Naama
Esther Bat Frida Shmaryahu Yosef Chaim Ben Rivka Rachel

Noach Yisrael Ben Yaffah Miriam Bat Bakol
Yitzchak Elimelech Ben Chana Sarah

Frida Bat Yaffa

Take It To Court

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Our goal during this time period is to develop and strengthen our relationship with Boreh Olam, so that you'll be the one that will have the prosecution saying "I'm not messing with this one..." *Ani I'Dodi* – I am to my loved One; I have a relationship with Hashem – *v'Dodi Li* – and Hashem has a relationship with me. In Elul, we're not worried. *Ani I'Dodi* – "I love you Hashem!" we proclaim, "And I know in my heart, because of what You did for me this past year and because of the life that You gave me, I **know** that *v'Dodi Li*, that You're into me as much as I'm into You." *That's* the relationship that we need to take to court on Rosh Hashanah.

(R' Zecharia Wallerstein)

R' Itche Meir would say to take on two *kabalot* during this time:

1. Talk to Hashem for a few minutes every day in your own words.
2. Spend a few minutes learning a *sefer* that you love that makes you feel closer to Hashem.

"Every word that we speak in prayer is a priceless seed entrusted in the Hands of Hashem for safekeeping. The day will come when it will bring forth a generous harvest."

(R' Shimshon Pincus)

The Great Debate

R' Menachem Goldberger, Shlit"a, shared an inspiring story:

*The Ponovezher Rav was once on a fundraising trip in America, and he visited New York. It was in the 1930s, and back then, there was a very big struggle for people to observe Shabbat. There was a lot of pressure from work and keeping Shabbat meant getting fired. At the same time, there was also a very strong Reform movement, which would constantly argue and debate with the religious community. Often, the reform would call in Orthodox leaders for a live, public debate. During his trip, the Ponovezher Rav happened to be in a shul where one of these debates was being held. It was the reform rabbi against the Orthodox community. The reform rabbi, very confident in himself and his abilities, got up and announced, "Who is the president in this shul? I want to speak with the president of the shul." The president got up and walked to the front, whereupon the reform rabbi continued, "Mister, I have one question for you: Do you keep Shabbat?" The president was a man that had been keeping Shabbat for a long time, but recently felt he had no choice due to the current financial difficulties his business was suffering, and started working a little bit on Shabbat. This was something that was very painful for him, and now he had been put in front of everyone and the reform rabbi jumped on that. He figured that Shabbat was something that probably everyone struggled with, and it was an easy target. The president started coughing and stammering, muttering to try to escape the piercing question, but the reform rabbi persisted, "No, no; I'm asking you a question. Do you keep Shabbat?" The man tried very hard but after a few moments his face turned beet-red and painfully admits, "No..." The reform rabbi turned to the crowd and scoffed, "If the president of the Orthodox shul doesn't keep Shabbat, why should anybody keep Shabbat?" He started laughing, and walked off. He won the debate. It was over. What would anyone say to say to him? Little did he know that in the crowd sat the Ponovezher Rav, who knew what to say. He got up to the front and said before the crowd, "Excuse me, can I ask you a question?" The reform rabbi didn't know who this was, and he walked back up to the front of the shul. "**Mister**," said the Ponovezher Rav, "Let me ask **you** a question. Do **you** keep Shabbat?" "Of course not," replied the reform rabbi with pride and confidence, "If the Orthodox president doesn't keep it... of course I don't keep Shabbat!" The Ponovezher Rav turned to the audience and announced, "It says that if a person's sins are red, they're going to turn white. (ישעיה א:יח) אם חטאיכם יהיו כשנים, כשלג ילבינו. Let me explain the difference between **you** and the president here. This man, every time he has to do something on Shabbat, he turns red with shame. It hurts him inside. And whenever someone makes a mistake and they turn red because they feel bad and embarrassed about it, he still has a chance, and eventually he will come to keep Shabbat and his children will be observant. He will overcome his struggles. **You** are confident in your decision to not keep Shabbat. There's no chance for somebody like you. And that's the difference between you two. This person here is not lost... you're lost." And with that, the Ponovezher Rav sat back down. It was over. He won the debate.*