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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Rosh HaShanah,
& Parshat Ha'azinu, Shabbat Shuvah 5785
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
 Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
 Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה
Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
 Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
 ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחיו
Shagalov

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FREIND
 Reb **Yosef Yisroel** ben Reb **Sholom** ע"ה **Rosner**
 Passed away on 7 Menachem-Av, 5777
 ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

DEDICATED BY HIS FRIENDS
 Mr. & Mrs. **Gershon** and **Leah** שיחיו **Wolf**
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחיו **Shagalov**

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The most essential matter is that "so shall it be for us, in actuality." Moreover, indeed, it has already been, in the past tense. In particular, our Rebbes and leaders have revealed to us that the publication of the coming of Moshiach is in the newspapers.¹ This has actually occurred in recent times, as several newspapers throughout the world have publicized (and we should increase the publicity) that "**Behold, he (Melech HaMoshiach) is coming.**"² Immediately and literally speaking, **he should have already come**, below ten handbreadths³ and in a manner that is manifest for the entire world to see, and especially "for the eyes of all of Israel."⁴ And may this occur in actuality, immediately!

(from the talk of Shabbos Parshas Netzavim 5751, Second day of Rosh Hashanah, and Shabbos Parshas Vayelech, 6 Tishrei, 5752)

1. See *Sefer HaSichos Toras Shalom*, p. 12: "The Rebbe (the Alter Rebbe) has said that Moshiach will appear in the gazettin (newspapers) ... all the Jews will be ready for the coming of Moshiach as if the newspapers reported that he is coming..."

2. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8. And in *Shir HaShirim Rabba* on the verse.

3. [An expression frequently used by the Rebbe to denote that what will occur is not just a metaphor or even a spiritual reality, but that it will be so in the domain that we inhabit, within the confines of the physical world. Translator's note.]

4. End of Parshas *Brocha*.

LIKKUTEI SICHOT

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

•

Volume X: *Devarim*

•

In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

40

ROSH HASHANAH

WHEN G-D IS TO BE FOUND

On the verse,¹ “Seek G-d when He is to be found,” our Sages comment:² “These are the 10 days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.”

The wording of our Sages’ statement is problematic. On one hand, the expression “the 10 days *between* Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur,” seems to imply that Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are not included in these days.³ Nevertheless, the expression “These are the 10 days...” indicates that Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are indeed included in the count, for there are only seven days *between* Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.

This compels us to understand that there are two elements to the observance of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur: a) an essential quality which transcends the service of *teshuvah*, and b) the service of *teshuvah* which characterizes all 10 days.

First, our Divine service must center on the essential aspect of Rosh HaShanah. Afterwards comes the aspect associated with *teshuvah*. Thus, there are 10 days of *teshuvah* between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, for the aspect of

The most essential matter is: the true and complete Redemption, truly immediately!

Several signs indicate the imminence of the Redemption, primarily the statement of our Sages¹ many generations ago that: "All the deadlines have passed, and the matter depends solely on Teshuvah [repentance, return]." My sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation clarified that Teshuvah had already been achieved, and that we "all stand ready,"² and we have been ready for quite some time.

*(The blessing of the Rebbe Shlita, after the Annulment of the Vows,
Erev Rosh Hashanah, 5752)*

1. *Yeshayahu* 55:6.

2. *Rosh HaShanah* 18a.

3. Compare to *Taanis* 5a; see also *S'dei Chemed, Klallim Beis*, sec. 72.

1. *Sanhedrin* 97:2.

2. The expression of my Sainted father-in-law in his letter of 26 Adar I 5698 - [published in] his *Igros Kodesh* vol. 4, p. 279. And see *HaYom Yom* 15 Teves.

stands above the Torah and its *mitzvos*.²³ For this reason, *teshuvah* has the power to wipe away all blemishes caused by lack of observance.

Although *teshuvah* primarily involves the inner dimension of the soul, it also relates to “the heavens and the earth,” the lower aspects of our spiritual makeup. Nevertheless, in this motif, the “the heavens and the earth” are not seen as distinct entities, for through *teshuvah*, the essence of the soul shines, and on that level, all the soul’s powers are as one.

DRAWING DOWN G-D’S INFLUENCE

By making the heavens and the earth witnesses for the Jewish people, Moshe prevented them from sinning (as Rabbi Yochanan teaches:²⁴ A person will never sin when he knows that someone is watching). Moreover, it encourages all three thrusts: Torah study, the observance of *mitzvos*, and *teshuvah*.

The month of Tishrei gives us the strength for our Divine service in the year to come. Since all influence is conveyed through the Torah, it is in this month that we read *Parshas Haazinu*, which draws down²⁵ this spiritual influence. And this in turn assures us of G-d’s blessings as conveyed by the heavens and the earth throughout the year.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Haazinu*, 5723)



23. This is reflected in our Sages’ statements (*Bereishis Rabbah* 1:4) that G-d’s thoughts for the Jewish people preceded His thoughts of the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

24. *Berachos* 28b.

25. See *Tanya*, the conclusion of ch. 37.

teshuvah associated with Rosh HaShanah comes after the essential aspect of Rosh HaShanah.⁴

MAKING HIM KING

Teshuvah transcends all other *mitzvos*. It can thus atone for all blemishes in the observance of *mitzvos*, for it reaches a deeper point in the soul than is reached by the other *mitzvos*.⁵ And as mentioned above, since the essential aspect comes before the service of *teshuvah*, it follows that this aspect of Rosh HaShanah transcends even *teshuvah*.

What is the essential aspect of Rosh HaShanah? The coronation of G-d as King. Thus our Sages quote⁶ G-d as asking: “Say before Me... verses reflecting My Kingship to make Me King over you.”

Until we have accepted G-d as King, serving Him through the observance of *mitzvos* is not relevant. And so our Sages

4. Similarly, there are two dimensions to Yom Kippur: a) the aspect of *teshuvah*; and b) its essential quality, which is revealed at the conclusion of the Ten Days of *Teshuvah*. See the *sichah* for Yom Kippur in this series.

5. See *Likkutei Torah, Vayikra*, p. 26c; *Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Vidui U’Teshuvah*. On this basis, it is possible to explain why, in his reckoning of the 613 *mitzvos* in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, the *Rambam* does not count *teshuvah* (focusing on *vidui*, confession, instead). For *teshuvah* transcends all the *mitzvos*, and includes them all. Thus it can be considered a general command, and is not included in the reckoning of the 613 *mitzvos* (*Sefer HaMitzvos*, General Principle 4).

One cannot argue that *teshuvah* should be counted as one of the *mitzvos* because it involves a particular deed (see pgs. 89-90 above). For *teshuvah* possesses two dimensions:

a) Its essential quality is the sinner’s resolution to observe the Torah and its *mitzvos* in the future. This parallels other commands of a general nature, such as “be holy” (*Vayikra* 19:2), and
b) Regret over one’s past deeds. This parallels the general command “Do not stiffen your necks any longer” (*Devarim* 10:16). As *Sefer HaMitzvos* (*loc. cit.*) mentions, both of these thrusts are general in nature.

The aspect of *teshuvah* that involves deed is the act of *vidui*, confession. And the *Rambam* does count confession as one of the *mitzvos* (positive *mitzvah* 73).

6. *Rosh HaShanah* 16a; 34b.

quote G-d as saying:⁷ “Accept My Kingship, and afterwards accept My decrees.” Therefore *teshuvah*, which serves to atone for failures in fulfilling the King’s decrees, is relevant only after His Kingship is accepted.

Our acceptance of G-d as King relates to His essence — a level above all revelations. The observance of the *mitzvos* relates to G-d’s will as it has come into revelation, for all the *mitzvos* are expressions of His will.

Teshuvah, which atones for transgressions of His will, relates to a higher level of G-dliness, but one which still shares a connection to His will.⁸ For a level which *totally* transcends G-d’s will must also transcend the service which repents for transgressions of that will. Thus *teshuvah* still relates to revealed levels of G-dliness. The acceptance of G-d as King, however, relates to G-d’s essence, which transcends all revelations.⁹

From this, we can appreciate the uniqueness of the souls of the Jewish people — that they can affect G-d’s very essence and evoke in Him a desire to be King. To be able to affect G-d’s essence, however, it is necessary to express the inner *bittul* that lies at the center of every Jewish soul.¹⁰ This is expressed in our request of G-d:¹¹ “Reign over the entire world in Your glory.”

7. *Mechilta*, *Shmos* 20:3; *Toras Kohanim*, *Acharei*, ch. 13; *Yalkut Shimoni* to *Shmos*, *loc. cit.*

8. For this reason, in several texts of *Chassidus* (e.g., the series of *maamarim* beginning Rosh HaShanah, 5691), *teshuvah* is described as relating to “the depths of His will,” or to “the Master of the will.”

9. See the explanation of this concept in the series of *maamarim* beginning Rosh HaShanah, 5703.

10. When the essence of a Jewish soul is revealed, it draws down G-d’s essence, or becomes a vehicle for that essence which is rooted in it. (See the *maamar* entitled *Mi E-l Kamocho*, 5627, sec. 2.)

11. Rosh HaShanah liturgy, *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 274.

has an element that relates to deed — the study of Torah in speech, as reflected in the mention of “the earth.” Similarly, it also relates to the commitment of simple faith and *kabbalas ol*, as reflected in the mention of the Jews’ commitment “We will do and we will listen.”

The second interpretation focuses on the *mitzvos*, for “deed is most essential.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, the *mitzvos* also include an element which relates to “the heavens,”²⁰ as reflected in the *mitzvos* of calculating leap years²¹ and the like.

Moreover, in each *mitzvah* there is an aspect of “heaven” (the intent of the *mitzvos*) and an aspect of “earth” (the actual deed).²² Needless to say, the influence of the soul’s essence is also present, for all *mitzvos* must be fulfilled with *kabbalas ol*.

Thus the two witnesses, the heavens and the earth, are present with regard to every *mitzvah*, for the performance of every *mitzvah* involves both “the heavens,” the intent motivating the *mitzvah*, and “the earth,” the actual deed. Moreover, the two are not divorced from each other, or there would be only one witness for each. Instead, within the deed is the intent, and the intent is deeply felt, so that it will surely be expressed in deed.

The third interpretation emphasizes the thrust of *teshuvah*. For that reason, it speaks about “not observing all the *mitzvos*” that involve the heavens and the earth — a lack in both intent (“the heavens”) and deed (“the earth”). *Teshuvah*, which stems from the inner dimensions of the soul, expresses the inherent virtue of the Jewish people — a quality that

19. Cf. *Avos* 1:17.

20. This refers to also to *mitzvos* that involve deed, not only to the “duties of the heart,” such as the love of G-d and the awe of Him.

21. Even the deed of these *mitzvos* involves “the heavens.” Nevertheless, this involves “the heavens” as they are included in the realm of *mitzvos*, which as a whole is considered “the earth.”

22. Therefore the deed generates garments for the soul in the lower *Gan Eden* (“the earth”), while the intent generates garments in the higher *Gan Eden* (“the heavens”).

according to the structure of creation. Mankind relates to this level through deeds of observance.

Similarly, in the world at large, the level of *Havayah* relates to the heavens, while the level of *E-lohim* relates to the earth.

On this basis, we can understand why Moshe wanted to inspire the Jews to the observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* by calling to the heavens and the earth. By calling to the heavens, Moshe wanted to spur the Jews to serve G-d with their “heavenly powers” of intellect and thought, and by calling to the earth, he sought to evoke Divine service on the level of speech and deed.¹⁷

THREE DIFFERENT APPROACHES

The three levels of soul mentioned above: the essence, “the heavens,” and “the earth,” are reflected in three different modes of observance. “The earth” is given expression in the actual deeds of the *mitzvos*, “the heavens,” in the study of Torah, and the essence of the soul in the thrust to *teshuvah*. (Because these three modes of observance are expressions of holiness, however, each one includes the others.)

On this basis, we can comprehend the passage from the *Sifri* cited at the outset. Each of the three interpretations in the *Sifri* refers to one of these paths. The first interpretation, stating that the Torah was given from the heavens, reflects primarily the importance of “the heavens,” our intellectual comprehension¹⁸ of G-dliness. Nevertheless, the Torah also

17. *Ibid.*, *Devarim* 64c.

18. This is why the first interpretation mentions “the Torah [which] was given from the heavens,” while the second interpretation highlights “the *mitzvos*... involving the heavens.” Through intellectual comprehension, one can grasp merely a ray.

Conversely, with regard to the *mitzvos*, even the intent which “the heavens” contain exists solely so that the deed will be carried out with vitality. It is the actual deed that draws down G-d’s essence. The intent of the *mitzvah* is only for this essential influence to be expressed in a revealed manner.

“HEAD OF THE YEAR”

Names employed by the Torah are chosen because they describe the true nature of the things to which they refer, expressing their very life-force.¹² This also applies to Rosh HaShanah, which literally means “head of the year.”¹³

The head has several unique aspects:

a) The head is the most elevated and sophisticated of all the body’s limbs;

b) The head includes the life-energy for all the limbs of the body within it; and

c) The head directs the functioning of all the limbs.

Parallels to all three qualities apply with regard to Rosh HaShanah:

a) The Divine service which characterizes Rosh HaShanah — the crowning of G-d as King — affects G-d’s essence, a level which is above the Divine service carried out throughout the year.

b) Rosh HaShanah is also a day of *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* relates to the *mitzvos*, but stands above them. Indeed, it can be said to include them.

c) The good resolutions made on Rosh HaShanah influence one’s observance of *mitzvos* in the year to come, affecting them as the head directs the limbs of the body.

THE SHOFAR’S MESSAGE

With regard to Rosh HaShanah, it is said:¹⁴ “The *mitzvah* of the day involves the *shofar*.” Based on the above explanations, it follows that all three factors mentioned above — the coronation of G-d, *teshuvah*, and the observance of the *mitz-*

12. *Tanya*, *Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, ch. 1.

13. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Devarim* 41c; *Ateres Rosh*, in the beginning.

14. *Rosh HaShanah* 27a.

vos — are reflected in the sounding of the *shofar*.¹⁵ And, as is true with regard to all matters of *P'nimiyus HaTorah*, this concept is also alluded to in *Nigleh*, the revealed dimension of Torah law.

In *Hilchos Teshuvah*,¹⁶ the *Rambam* writes:

Although the sounding of the *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah is a decree from the Torah, it also contains an allusion. [It is as if the *shofar* is saying:] “Awake.... Turn to G-d in *teshuvah*.”

A question arises: Why does the *Rambam* state this concept in *Hilchos Teshuvah* rather than in *Hilchos Shofar*? Although the *Rambam* is speaking about *teshuvah*, since he is explaining the motivating principle for the *mitzvah* of *shofar*, seemingly, it would have been more appropriate to include it in *Hilchos Shofar*.

To cite a parallel: The *Rambam* concludes his *Hilchos Mikvaos*¹⁷ with an explanation of the motivating principle for immersion in a *mikveh*:

15. On this basis, we can appreciate the explanation in the *maamar* of the Alter Rebbe entitled *B'Chochmah Yivneh Bayis* [5564] (printed in 5722; see also the other *maamarim* cited there) regarding the rationale for the recitation of *Malchiyos*, *Zichronos*, and *Shofros*: “In order for the influence [of the *mitzvah*] to be maintained, it is necessary that it be sealed by the Torah.”

On the surface, this is problematic, for with regard to other *mitzvos*, it is not necessary to bring proof from the Torah. Why then is this necessary with regard to sounding the *shofar*?

The situation can be explained as follows: A seal is necessary when influence is drawn from a level which transcends the spiritual cosmos, as is the case with *teshuvah*, and certainly with regard to the crowning of G-d.

This also explains the continuation of the *maamar*: “As we see with regard to the mysteries and secrets of the Torah in the *Zohar*, the author of these concepts would always quote a verse from the Torah as support. For without [such support], the mystic secrets he taught could not be maintained.”

In this instance as well, since the mystic secrets reflect the dimension of the Torah which transcends the limits of the spiritual cosmos, support from a Torah verse is necessary.

16. *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4.

also be able to understand G-dliness, love Him, and hold Him in awe.

This concept applies not only to the Divine service mandated by the Torah and its *mitzvos* at large, but also to our endeavors to turn to G-d in *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* comes from the inner dimensions of our being. It must, however, permeate our conscious powers as well. This is the implication of the Ten Days of *Teshuvah* — that *teshuvah* must permeate all 10 powers of our soul.¹³

The microcosm is reflected in the macrocosm. Just as a person draws down the essence of his soul into his 10 conscious powers of intellect and emotion, so too G-d's essence must be drawn down into His revealed levels, which are associated with the Torah and its *mitzvos*.

This concept is alluded to in the Ten Commandments, which begin:¹⁵ *Anochi Havayah*¹ *E-lohecha* (“I am G-d, your L-rd”). *Anochi* refers to G-d's essence, “which cannot be confined to a name, nor can it be alluded to by a letter or even by the point of a letter.”¹⁶ The essence of a Jew is bound to the level of *Anochi*.

Havayah is one of the names of G-d, and yet it is a name which reflects His essence, and which is at one with that essence. Mankind relates to this level through the conscious powers of intellect and emotion.

E-lohecha is a form of the name *E-lohim*, which indicates how G-d contracts Himself and limits His manifestation

13. See *Likkutei Torah, Devarim* 46d. This concept is also reflected in the reading of *Parshas Nitzavim* on the *Shabbos* before Rosh HaShanah. That *parshah* begins: “You are all standing together,” referring to the essence of the soul which includes all the soul's 10 powers. Then it mentions 10 levels, referring to the 10 conscious powers of the soul. The implication is that the essence must permeate all these 10 conscious powers.

14. *Havayah* refers to the name ה-ו-ה-י, which, because of its great holiness, is not pronounced as its letters would ordinarily be sounded.

15. *Shmos* 20:2.

16. *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar*, p. 80b.

that the Torah and its *mitzvos* were given by Him. Indeed, this concept is emphasized in the blessing recited before Torah study, which praises G-d “who gave us *His* Torah,” and the blessing recited before the performance of a *mitzvah*, which praises G-d “who gave us *His mitzvos*.” These blessings do not mention the fact that the Torah was given from the heavens, or that it was given to the Jews on the earth.

It is true that the verse “Give ear, O heavens... listen O earth...” also implies¹¹ that if the Jewish people observe the Torah and its *mitzvos*, G-d will employ the heavens and the earth to reward them. Is this, however, the appropriate means of encouraging observance?

This question is reinforced by the fact that *Parshas Haazinu* is always read in the Ten Days of *Teshuvah*, or in the days between Yom Kippur and Sukkos. During this time of year, when a Jew’s Divine service should emanate from the inner dimensions of his soul, surely he should be concerned with matters above reward.

OF HEAVEN AND OF EARTH

As mentioned on several occasions,¹² the Divine service a Jew is asked to perform involves the fusion of two opposites. We must serve G-d with simple faith and *kabbalas ol*, which stem from the essence of the soul and transcend our understanding. But our Divine service must also involve our conscious powers of intellect and emotion. They too must perceive G-dliness.

The bond which the essence of the soul shares with G-d must be extended into the realm of the conscious powers, so that we will serve G-d with more than simple faith. We will

11. As mentioned in *Rashi’s* commentary to the verse.

12. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Mishpatim* in this series, and *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1216.

These are decrees of the Torah.... Nevertheless, there is an allusion to the concept... to purify one’s soul from its impurity and base character traits... by immersion in the waters of pure knowledge.

This concept, though related to the Divine service of *teshuvah*, is stated in *Hilchos Mikvaos* and not in *Hilchos Teshuvah* because it describes the rationale for immersion in the *mikveh*. Why then is the rationale for sounding the *shofar* not explained in *Hilchos Shofar*?

The *Rambam’s* statements also provoke another question: The *Talmud* states:⁶ “Say before Me... verses reflecting My Kingship to make Me King over you. By what means? Via the *shofar*.” The *shofar* is thus the medium which brings about the coronation of G-d.¹⁸

Why does the *Rambam* not mention this allusion?

The answer to these questions requires that we understand three elements involved in the sounding of the *shofar*:

a) The *mitzvah* of sounding the *shofar*, as expressed in all the particular laws which apply to it. The *Rambam* considers this as one of the 613 *mitzvos*, and mentions these laws in *Hilchos Shofar*.

b) The concept of *teshuvah*. This is alluded to by the sounding of the *shofar*. *Teshuvah* reflects a rung above the observance of *mitzvos*. To point to this quality, the *Rambam* mentions this concept in *Hilchos Teshuvah*, and not in *Hilchos*

17. Apparently, there is a printing error in the standard text of the *Mishneh Torah*. It would seem that the text in *Mikvaos* should read: “When he immerses himself in the waters of pure knowledge, he becomes pure.”

18. This is the simple meaning of the quote from *Rosh HaShanah* cited previously. Similarly, this is one of the intentions which we are to have in mind when performing the *mitzvah* of sounding the *shofar*, as stated in *Likkutei Torah*, *Devarim* 56d, and other Chassidic texts. See also *I Melachim* 1:39 [which speaks about sounding a *shofar* at the coronation of a mortal king.]

The *Tosefta* (*Rosh HaShanah* 1:11) mentions other reasons for sounding the *shofar*. These and similar reasons in other statements by our Sages reflect other dimensions of the *mitzvah*.

Shofar. *Hilchos Shofar* contains a description of the laws of sounding the *shofar*. It does not mention *teshuvah*, for this dimension transcends the *mitzvos* and is only alluded to by the *shofar*.¹⁹

This is reflected in the wording used by the *Rambam*: “Although the sounding of the *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah is a decree from the Torah.” In other words, although it is fundamentally a *mitzvah*, “it also contains an allusion,” i.e., it refers to *teshuvah*, which transcends the *mitzvos*.

c) The aspect of sounding the *shofar* which brings about G-d’s coronation. This aspect transcends the *mitzvah* of sounding the *shofar* entirely, and cannot be communicated even by an allusion. For an allusion reflects a thrust toward revelation, while the coronation of G-d, by contrast, brings forth the *bittul* that lies at the foundation of the soul [which is entirely above revelation].²⁰

CHOOSING FREELY

Based on the above, we can appreciate the connection between the sounding of the *shofar* and the verse:²¹ “He chooses our heritage for us,” which is recited before the sounding of the *shofar*.

19. The allusion reflected by immersion in the *mikveh* is, by contrast, mentioned in *Hilchos Mikvaos* because it is of a more particular nature. Although the *mikveh* is intended to purify blemishes, it involves “the purification of one’s soul... from base character traits... by immersion in the waters of pure knowledge,” and not an all-encompassing movement of *teshuvah*. Therefore it relates to *Hilchos Mikvaos*.

20. The allusion to this quality in the *shofar* is in the fact that it is narrow at its lower end. This narrowness is not a result of sin, but rather a reflection of the fact that the person feels as a separate and lowly entity, rather than an extension of G-d’s unbounded essence where his soul has its roots. This therefore affects G-d’s essence. See the conclusion of the *maamar* entitled *Shir HaMaalos*, 5703, and the conclusion of the series of *maamarim* beginning Rosh HaShanah, 5695.

21. *Tehillim* 47:4.

DIFFERENCES IN INTERPRETATION

There are several difficulties with the above passage. Firstly, what is the difference between the second and third interpretations cited above? There are some who claim that the inclusion of the third interpretation is a textual error.¹⁰ But the fact that it is included in ancient manuscripts and early printings of the *Sifri* does not support that contention.

There are slight textual differences between the two interpretations. In the second, the various *mitzvos* that involve the heavens and the earth are singled out. This is not the case in the third interpretation. Moreover, the third interpretation mentions “all the *mitzvos*... involving the heavens,” and “all the *mitzvos*... involving the earth.” Implied is that all the *mitzvos* have a connection to the heavens and the earth.

To understand the passage correctly, it is necessary to appreciate the implications for our Divine service contained within each of the interpretations. According to the second interpretation: What is the implication of the fact that some *mitzvos* are associated with the heavens and others with the earth? And according to the third interpretation: What is the implication of the concept that all the *mitzvos* share a connection to both the heavens and the earth?

There is another difficulty. According to the second interpretation — that “Hear O heavens” refers to the *mitzvos* involving the heavens, and “Listen O earth” refers to the *mitzvos* involving the earth — it would appear that for these *mitzvos*, there is only one witness — either heaven or earth. This is problematic, for Torah law requires two witnesses.

There is, moreover, a difficulty common to all three interpretations. The Torah and its *mitzvos* were given by G-d, who is incomparably higher than the heavens and the earth. Therefore, when attempting to inspire Jews to observance, it would seemingly have been more appropriate to emphasize

10. Therefore, it is set off by parenthesis in many printings of the *Sifri*.

leket,⁶ *shichachah*⁷, *peah*,⁸ *terumos*,⁹ tithes, the Sabbatical year, and the Jubilee year.”

Another interpretation: “Give ear, O heavens”; this is stated because they did not observe all the *mitzvos* given them involving the heavens, nor did they observe all the *mitzvos* given them involving the earth.

Moshe called two witnesses for the Jewish people that will exist forever. He told [the Jewish people]: “I am a mortal. Tomorrow, I will die. If someone will come and say ‘We did not accept the Torah,’ who will deny the claim? Therefore, I am calling as witnesses two witnesses who will exist forever.”

According to this version of the text, the final statement, that Moshe called the heavens and the earth as witnesses against the Jewish people, appears not as a new interpretation (for it is not prefaced with those words), but rather as a summation of the entire passage. The previous interpretations are not conflicting. Instead, each one reflects a different approach to Divine service, underscoring a perspective that is not highlighted by the other. Then after mentioning all these interpretations, the *Sifri* concludes by stating that Moshe called the heavens and the earth as witnesses.

For this reason, in his commentary on the Torah, *Rashi* — and it is well known the extent to which the Rebbeim lauded *Rashi*’s commentary, for it brings out the Torah’s inner dimensions — quotes only the final concept, which summarizes and includes all the other interpretations.

6. The prohibition against picking up an individual sheaf which has fallen (*Vayikra* 23:22).
 7. The prohibition against returning to take a forgotten sheave (*Devarim* 24:19).
 8. The obligation to leave a corner of the field unharvested (*ibid.*).
 9. The portion of the crops which must be given to the priests (*Bamidbar* 18:12).

In an ultimate sense, free choice involves choosing without regard to any factor or consideration other than the initiative of the one who chooses. When a person’s choice is motivated by a reason, it is as if that reason *forced* him to choose; this cannot be considered free choice.²²

How then can G-d’s “choos[ing of] our heritage for us” be associated with the sounding of the *shofar*? If His choice is dependent on the sounding of the *shofar*, how can it be considered free?

These questions can be answered by referring to the above concepts. The two aspects of sounding the *shofar* associated with the performance of the *mitzvah* and the Divine service of *teshuvah* do not relate to G-d’s essence. Instead, they draw down merely the revealed aspects of G-dliness — an arousal from above that is dependent on an arousal from below.

The *bittul* of the soul’s essence, which is expressed by the coronation of G-d through the sounding of the *shofar*, relates to G-d’s essence, tapping that level of the soul on which Jews are one with G-d. And at that level, G-d chooses the Jews freely; the sounding of the *shofar* is not what causes Him to choose.²³

UNLIMITED BLESSING

G-d’s essence knows no bounds. Since the influence drawn down by the sounding of the *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah is rooted in G-d’s essence, this influence is not restricted by any limitations of the spiritual cosmos. The influence is drawn down precisely as He desires it to be. And what He desires is certainly good, as it is written:²⁴ “In the countenance of the King, there is life.” *Penai*, translated here

22. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1309 and pgs. 1340-1342.
 23. See the *maamar* entitled *Yivchar Lanu*, 5703, sec. 14, which states: “Drawing down [G-d’s] will from [His essence] is not an imperative, for this comes from His essence, which is not prompted by an arousal at all.”
 24. *Mishlei* 16:15.

as “countenance,” also means “inner dimension.” Thus any desire emanating from G-d’s inner dimension will surely be associated with life and goodness.

This will be revealed on the material plane, for G-d’s essence is connected to our material reality. And so it is that every Jew will be inscribed for a good and sweet year, filled with open and apparent blessings.

(Adapted from *Sichos Rosh HaShanah* and *Sichos Simchas Beis HaShoevah*, 5723)



HAAZINU

UNDERSTANDING A PASSAGE IN THE SIFRI

On the verse,¹ “Give ear, O heavens and I will speak; listen, O earth to the words of my mouth,” the *Sifri* offers several interpretations, concluding as follows:

Another interpretation: “Give ear, O heavens.” This is stated because the Torah was given from the heavens, as it is written:² “You saw that I spoke to you from the heavens.”

“Listen O earth to the words of my mouth.” [The earth is mentioned, because] the Jews stood upon it when they said:³ “We will do and we will listen to all that G-d has spoken.”

Another interpretation: “Give ear, O heavens”; this is stated because they did not observe the *mitzvos* given them involving the heavens. The *mitzvos* given them involving the heavens are establishing leap years and determining the new months, as it is written:⁴ “They⁵ will serve you as a sign for the festivals, the days and the years.”

“Listen O earth”; this is stated because they did not observe the *mitzvos* given them involving the earth:

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1. *Devarim* 32:1.
 2. *Shmos* 20:19.
 3. *Ibid.*, 24:7.
 4. *Bereishis* 1:14.
 5. The sun, the moon and the stars.