

INSIGHTS

Into The Weekly Parsha

ADAPTED FROM THE SHIURIM OF HARAV YOCHANAN ZWEIG BY RABBI MORDECHAI SHIFMAN

ROSH HASHANA SPECIAL

SAY IT WITH CHUMROS

Question of the week

The days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are known as the “Aseres Y’mei Teshuva” – “Ten Days of Repentance”. The Talmud brings scriptural allusions for these ten days. However, if we count the actual days we find only eight. Clearly Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are included in the count of ten. If Rosh Hashana is a day of Teshuva why is there almost no reference to repentance in the Rosh Hashana liturgy?

feelings for our loved ones, a form of expression different than that used year-round is required. Similarly, when expressing to Hashem our love and commitment to Him, we must go beyond our regular observance in order to effectively convey our true feelings. Therefore, additional commitments are required only at this time of the year.

1. Kitzur Shulchan Aruch #128:1

The forty days from the beginning of Elul through Yom Kippur correspond with the forty days during which Moshe beseeched Hashem to forgive Bnei Yisroel for the sin of the Golden Calf. Since Moshe was answered favorably, descending from Mount Sinai on Yom Kippur with the new set of Tablets, this time period is known as the “Y’mei Ratzon”, a time when it is possible to rekindle our relationship with the Almighty.¹ Consequently, Chazal record that during this time a person should accept upon himself greater “chumros” - “stringencies” in his observance.

Most perplexing however, is the fact that we do not find any requirement to *continue* with these observances after the Yomim Nora’im. Performing these stringent acts during this time period only, appears hypocritical. What message are we relaying to the Almighty?

Our Rabbis tell us that the word “Elul” is an acronym for the phrase “Ani l’dodi v’dodi li” - “I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me”. These days are designated for focusing upon our relationship with Hashem. If a man were to bring his wife flowers daily, doing the same on their anniversary would not express his love for her. At times which are designated for expressing our true

Quick Halacha

There is an accepted custom not to sleep during the daytime of Rosh Hashana. The custom is based upon a passage found in some versions of the Talmud Yerushalmi which states that a person who sleeps at the beginning of the year will have mazal that sleeps the entire year. The Arizal permits a person to sleep in the afternoon. Similarly, the commentaries record that the Maharam Rottenberg would sleep on Rosh Hashana. The Mishna Berura comments that if a person who stays awake will be involved in idle chatter, it is preferable for him to go to sleep.

A FRIENDLY CHECK-UP

“...it shall be a day of shofar-sounding for you” (Bamidbar:29:1)

In Parshas Pinchas the Torah describes Rosh Hashana as “Yom Teruah” - “a day of sounding the Shofar”.¹ The Rambam states that the sound of the Shofar is a wake-up call for repentance.² The Ramban describes the Teruah as a battle-cry, instilling fear in all who hear its sound.³ Clearly the sound of the Shofar symbolizes the nature of the day; a day of awe and trepidation. Most perplexing however, is the verse found in the blessings of Balaam: “lo hibit aven b’Yaakov v’lo ra’ah amal b’Yisrael Hashem Elokav imo *u’teruas melech bo*” - “He perceived no iniquity in Yaakov, and saw no perversity in Yisroel. Hashem his G-d is with him, and the friendship of the King is in him.”⁴ The commentators translate “*teruas melech*” as “the friendship of the King”, “*teruas*” being from the word “*rayus*” - “friendship”.⁵ The aforementioned verse is included in the section of the Rosh Hashana liturgy known as “Shofros”. How does “*teruah*” being defined as a sound which instills fear coalesce with “*teruah*” defined as friendship?

Rashi explains the verse in Parshas Balak as Balaam expressing the futility of any attempt to curse Bnei Yisroel since Hashem does not scrutinize their iniquity nor criticize them for their shortcomings, even when they provoke Him by maliciously violating His word.⁶ Why would not criticizing a person for his wrongdoing be an expression of friendship? On the contrary, a true friend is not afraid to criticize, for that is the manner in which he expresses his concern for his friend’s well-being. Additionally, how can Rashi comment that Hashem is not critical of Bnei Yisroel for their violations? Does not the fact that a Day of Judgement exists dispel this notion?

It is difficult to accept criticism graciously, especially when the source of the criticism is an injured party. The reason for this is that we convince ourselves that the criticism is not being levied because the person cares for us, rather because he is an injured party. However, if the criticism is given by a person who we know to have our best interests at heart, we can accept that the rebuke is meant to prevent us from harmful behavior. Therefore, Rashi’s interpretation of the verse is the following: It is due to our “*rayus*” - “friendship” with Hashem, that He does not criticize us for what we have done to Him. Hashem is willing to overlook the hurt that we cause *Him*. It is only for the damage which we cause ourselves that Hashem rebukes and punishes us, for Hashem’s only agenda is our best interests.

Rashi in Parshas Acharei Mos likens the relationship enjoyed by Bnei Yisroel with Hashem to that of a doctor-patient relationship. Much the same way as a patient enters into an examination with fear but is comforted by the knowledge that his physician is a friend who has his best interests in mind, we too are subjected to an examination but find solace in the knowledge that the scrutiny to which we are being subjected is borne out of Hashem’s love for us and His desire to prevent the spread of any spiritual malignancies which we may possess. Therefore, the call of the Shofar instills fear but it is, nonetheless, a call of friendship.

1.29:1 2.Yad Hilchos Teshuva 3:4 3.29:1 4.23:21 5.See Rashi ibid see however Ibn Ezra ibid. 6.Ibid.

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