



Rosh Hashanah Mazal

In the very moving prayer of U'Nesane Tokef we read, "On Rosh Hashana it is written.... who will live, who will die....." Every year, G-d examines our deeds and decides our fate.

We seem to find otherwise in the Talmud: "Rava stated, 'Life, children and livelihood are not due to one's merits but rather to predetermined fate (Mazal)'".¹ However, in another tractate the Amoraim argue over whether the Jewish people are bound by Mazal.² Can a Jew change his fate or not?

The public Torah reading for every festival usually discusses the laws of that particular festival. However, on Rosh Hashana, the main reading is the portion containing, "And the Hashem remembered Sarah.... and she gave birth to a son"³.

The Talmud lists this as one of the events that occurred on Rosh Hashana.⁴ Thus, this reading must be relevant to the nature of the day. How does the story of Sarah giving birth relate to the essence of Rosh Hashana?

The different times of the year contain specific propensities that reflect past events. (eg. the month of Nissan, because of the occurrence of the Exodus therein, contains the proclivity for redemption).

Since Rosh Hashana is the day that man was created⁵ it follows that every Rosh Hashana contains the potential for renewal. Although certain aspects of one's life are predetermined, on Rosh Hashana the world returns to its origin. One, therefore, becomes capable of removing any limitations caused by his original Mazal.

Sarah was born physically incapable of bearing children⁶. On Rosh Hashana, her Mazal changed and she gave birth. Thus, this Torah reading encapsulates the essence of Rosh Hashana - that at this time of year Hashem gives us the opportunity to overcome our very Mazal and renew ourselves on every level.

¹ מועד כסן כח.

⁴ ראש השנה יא.

² שבת קנז.

⁵ ראש השנה י.

³ בראשית כא, א-ב.

⁶ יבמות סד.