

SCHEDULE

שבת קדש

Mincha Erev Shabbos 6:57 PM

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Daf Yomi 7:30 AM

Shacharis-Followed by Kiddush 8:30 AM

-Sof Zman K"ס- גר"א 9:54 < 9:18 גר"א

Pirkei Avos 6:05 PM

Mincha - Followed by Shalosh Seudos 6:55 PM

Maariv - 8:04 PM

Weekday Minyanim & Shiurim

Sunday- Erev Rosh Hashanah

Shacharis & Slichos 6:00 AM

Daf Yomi- By R' Teichman After Shacharis

STAY TUNED FOR THE ROSH
HASHANA SCHEDULE

Wednesday - צום גדליה -

Daf Yomi 5:45 AM

Shacharis 6:25 AM

Mincha 1:45 PM

Mincha / Maariv 6:50 PM

Thursday & Friday

Daf Yomi- By R' Teichman 5:45 AM

Shacharis 6:25 AM

Mincha (Thur) 1:45 PM

Mincha/Maariv (Thurs) 7:00 PM

Daf Yomi (Take II) 9:00 PM

Maariv (Thur) 9:45 PM

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Shalosh Seudos



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Issue#251

Monumental Change

There is an ancient custom recorded to visit a cemetery on Erev Rosh Hashana. Is it based on our desire to arouse a sense of our mortality so we may be prodded to change our ways? Perhaps we are seeking to enlist help in achieving a favorable judgment.

The Talmud (Berachos 18b) tells about a certain *Chosid*, pious individual, who was berated and belittled by his wife who fled to a graveyard on the eve of Rosh Hashana to escape his wife's wrath. Generally when the Talmud reports about "a certain *Chosid*", it refers to either the greatly pious Rabbi Yehuda bar Ilayi or Rabbi Yehuda ben Baba, one of the Ten Martyrs.

Was this *tzaddik* wallowing in such hopeless self pity that he sought refuge in of all places a cemetery on the eve of Rosh Hashana?

On Moshe Rabbeinu's last day on earth he summons the entire Jewish Nation to gather around him for his final evaluation of and charge to them.

(דברים טז ט"ב) אתם נצבים היום, *you are standing today*, Moshe declares, לפני ד', *before Hashem*, all of you, heads of tribes, elders, officers- all the men of Israel, children, women, the proselyte even the wood choppers and water carriers, ... לעברך בברית, *for you to pass into the covenant...*, למען הקים אתך היום לו לעם, *in order to establish you today as a people to Him...*

This assertion by Moshe of the nation's accountability is reminiscent of what we experience each Rosh Hashana. Indeed this portion is always read the Shabbos immediately prior to Rosh Hashana. Furthermore, the Holy Zohar teaches that whenever the Torah utilizes the term "היום", *today*, as it does here: אתם נצבים היום, it refers to Rosh Hashana. (זה"ק רע"מ רלא א) Rashi in describing Moshe's encouraging the nation as he was handing over the reigns of leadership to his outstanding disciple, Yehoshua, uses a most unusual depiction. He states that Moshe, עשה אותם מצבה, *made them into a "monument"*. How does one become a monument? In what way would this notion give them a boost?

(Alternately the correct vowelization might be מצִבָּה, referring to a purposeful and defined positioning and situating of a group of people)

In three separate headings entitled אתם נצבים, Rashi brings three distinct interpretations to this concept of נצבים.

- 1) מלמד שכנסם; *this comes to teach he assembled every facet of society before Hashem.* In this context נצבים simply means to "stand" in one's own space together with the entire nation.
- 2) הריי אתם קיימים; *you still exist* despite the many failures of character and their severe consequences. נצבים here implying "survival" and durability.
- 3) עשה אותם מצבה; *He deemed them a monument*; just as a monument represents a life's essence and its contributions, so too did Moshe instill within them a sense of greatness and accomplishment. The usage of נצבים would connote a firm, purposeful and proud stance, signifying strength and accomplishment.

These three ideas could be succinctly expressed as representing each of our own 1) "unique" mission, 2) resilience and 3) vast potential for personal greatness.

Moshe hoped to bequeath them the confidence they needed to go forward. If they would realize that: they each have a singular role to fulfill that no other one could; that they possess tremendous strength to endure even after having fallen and that; there is limitless room for growth and accomplishment, they would certainly succeed.

In a fascinating parallel to this idea, the Talmud (Rosh Hashana 18a) when interpreting the words of the Mishna that describe our individual judgement before G-d on Rosh Hashana: כל באי עולם עוברין לפניו כגבי מרון, *All the world's inhabitants pass before Him like "Bnei Maron"*, also offers three definitions of this term.

- 1) We are like אמרנא, sheep who are tended to and counted one by one through a small opening that allows only one animal to pass at a time.
- 2) This alludes to the מעלות, the elevated paths, of the region of מרון, Maron, that are very narrow and possess a steep drop on both sides that necessitate carefully walking one behind another.
- 3) Or perhaps the root of מרון stems from the concept of מרות, mastery, referring to the

mighty soldiers of the House of David who are enumerated singly as they go out in battle, each with their specific function and role.

Three examples expressing a simple idea, that we are each judged individually. So why do we need three interpretations?

Here too, as we approach Rosh Hashana we often stand before G-d discouraged.

Who am I? Who has the power to survive so many challenges? What can I already accomplish?

In these three definitions lies the three aspects of reassurance we all need to reiterate.

As soldiers every one of us has a specific role that is indispensable. Like sheep we can endure the difficult seasons and varied attacks when we are in the hands of a loyal shepherd. We have the capacity to ascend the highest peaks and traverse the most dangerous passages, revealing newly found abilities and achievement, despite the fears that seek to defeat us.

When we feel forlorn and dejected we must remember that we are each equipped to attain our unique mission, aided by a dedicated Shepherd and invested with untold strengths that are waiting to be discovered.

Perhaps we visit a cemetery not only to awaken to reality out of fear from mortality but to acknowledge that we are here to etch our own destiny upon the "מצבה" the "monumental" purpose we all exist for and must strive to attain.

The demoralized *Chosid* sought perhaps to refocus on his personal mission by escaping to the cemetery where he would encourage himself to withstand the challenge, so he may continue adding lines to his ultimate מצבה by forging forward and not getting discouraged.

I vividly remember when as a teenager I was privileged to hear the powerful words of the famed Maggid of Yerushalayim, Rav Sholom Shvadron.

He retold how his great teacher Rav Leib Chasman was transfixed one day as he was gazing out of a window that looked out onto a busy street teeming with life and filled with all sorts of people going to and fro.

The great Baal Mussar was asked as to why he was so engrossed in the scene.

He responded that he was marveling at the sight of a "leibidige Bais Hakvaros", a living cemetery!

"Don't you see", he bemoaned, "over there strolls a walking monument that reads 'פה נטמן', 'Here Lies Buried...'; a great scholar, a generous philanthropist, a skilled teacher, an enthusiast of kindness, a magnificent parent, spouse and friend."

There are so many of us that live our lives with apathy, focusing solely on survival. We are burying our potential not only for the ultimate reward but for true happiness in life here on earth. What will assure us real pleasure is the leading of meaningful lives despite the obstacles. If only we would accept this truth, we would excite our universe.

Think for a moment what would you want written on your tombstone one day, Rav Sholom would add; that you filed three thousand tax returns, filled five thousand cavities, sold millions of dollars in merchandise, cheered at thousands of home games, surfed the net endlessly in search of ...?

There are many lines yet to be written on our final record of achievement. It is up to us to fill in those blanks.

We must make "monumental" changes in our lives, in action and attitude, so that we too may merit a life in joyous service to our beloved Creator.

As we approach the יום הדין, we should at least mentally "visit" the בית הדין the *House of the Living*, as a cemetery is euphemistically called, because in that consciousness lies the ultimate reality of where we stand in life!

"עשה אותם מצבה" *He made them into a "monument"*
אתם נצבים היום, *You are standing today!*

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