



A Good and Sweet Year

There is an age old practice mentioned by *Chazal* to eat certain foods on the night of Rosh Hashannah. These are known as *simanim* - signs that we pray will symbolize a good year. Short *tefillas* accompany the *simanim* and the *poskim* comment that the intent and thoughts of *teshuvah* that occur at this time can help make the *simanim* a reality. Perhaps the most popular of the *simanim* is the custom to partake of an apple dipped in honey. At this time, we fervently beseech Hashem for a *shana tova u'mesukah*, a good and sweet year. By analyzing what this dual request of "good and sweet" represents, we can gain a greater appreciation of what to concentrate our thoughts on at this opportune moments.

Chazal teach us that when events occur that are especially good, we are required to recite the *bracha* of *Hatov V'hameitiv* - Hashem is good, and Does good. There is another *bracha* that is recited when something bad happens, the *bracha* of *Dayan Ha'Emes* - Hashem is the true judge. These different *berachos* are only recited in this world; in the world to come, only the *bracha* on good will be recited. The future is described as a day that is only good. Creation was originally supposed to be this way. When Hashem began the creation of the world with the creation of light, the Torah tells us that the light was good. Unfortunately for us, this light could not be retained in this world and Hashem hid it away for the righteous for days to come. When we ask Hashem for *ashana tova*, we are not just asking for good things in this world. We are elevating our thoughts by beseeching Hashem for a world that is all good. We are dreaming about a world in which the original light of Creation of Hashem's presence is discernible.

In addition to a good year, we also ask for a sweet one. They words of Torah are compared to gold and honey. "More precious than gold and sweeter than honey" is Dovid *HaMelech's* description of Hashem's words. What is the significance of comparing the Torah to honey if it is already comparable to gold? Isn't gold obviously more valuable than honey? Gold and honey are fundamentally different from one another. Although gold is more valuable, it is only significant because of what it can purchase. It does not provide actual pleasure, but rather it enables one to purchase worldly pleasures. Honey, although not particularly expensive, is intrinsically enjoyable. The words of Torah are compared to both gold and honey. Torah is like spiritual gold in that the acquisition of Torah knowledge enables one to better perform *Mitzvos*, and Torah study helps perfect a person's character traits. Like gold, it is valuable for what it can accomplish. However, Torah is also much more than spiritual gold, because the words of Torah are sweeter than honey. Even without any other advantages gained by Torah study, learning Torah is the sweetest gift Hashem has given us. It is both more precious than gold and simultaneously sweeter than honey.

The *Ohr HaChaim* has a remarkable comment (*Devarim* 26:11) wherein he describes how we would react to the goodness and sweetness of Torah if we truly appreciated it to the fullest. We would be so overwhelmed by the sweet taste of Torah that we wouldn't be able to pursue anything else. As we dip our apple in our honey on Rosh Hashanah, we should be focusing on the lofty dreams of having a good and sweet year. We beseech Hashem to see His light and taste His Torah. May this year be a year of only goodness and sweetness for all of *Klal Yisroel*.

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