

ק"ק שערי ציון
CONGREGATION
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Rosh Hashana

Rabbi A.H. Leibowitz quotes the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni) which gives a beautiful parable of a city surrounded by enemy legions while its inhabitants are sleeping, blissfully unaware of the terrible danger that awaits them. One elderly resident of the city is awake and, recognizing the situation, begins to shout and rouse his neighbors to fight for their lives. If they heed his words, they will be saved. If not, they will all be killed. Similarly, the shofar rouses us from our slumber, alerting us to the grave danger we are facing and urging us to fight the prosecuting Satan with sincere repentance.

We can extract a powerful lesson from this Midrash: we are not speaking about a city that faces enemy forces approaching from a distance, or even from close range. The city is being completely surrounded by the enemy, which has the element of surprise in its favor, while the inhabitants, snoring peacefully in their beds, seem to have lost any chance to save themselves. Yet the Midrash says that if the people listen to the old man, they will be saved. This is the incredible power of the shofar. The sounds of the shofar can galvanize us into action even at the very last moment and give us the energy to fight for our lives with teshuva.

Unfortunately, most people approach Rosh Hashana and the terrifying confrontation of the Day of Judgement slumbering in the same oblivion as the city-dwellers in the parable. But all is not lost. Every Jew, no matter how apathetic or spiritually asleep he may be, has the gift, the ability to hear the call

of the shofar and to respond - not with paralyzing fear, but with a superhuman effort to sincerely change his habits and attitudes. The proper approach to tekiat shofar involves letting it shake us up and allowing it to make us tremble with a healthy, productive fear that generates a powerful thrust to do teshuva - a teshuva that can save us from the enemy in the most desperate circumstances, and gain for us a year of blessing, of good health, of livelihood, and most importantly, a year of spiritual growth that enables us to become better, more faithful servants of Hashem, the King of all Kings.

Tizku L'Shanim Rabot!

Rabbi Yaacov Ben- Haim

Laws of Ereb Rosh Hashana

- Some have a custom to fast *on Ereb Rosh Hashana*.
- *Tahanun* is not recited on *Ereb Rosh Hashana* in *Shahrit* and *Minha*, but is recited in the *Selihot*.
- It is customary to perform "*Hatarat Nedarim*" -- annulling all vows on *ereb Rosh Hashana*. The purpose of this is to save oneself from the punishment for failing to fulfill vows made during the course of the year.

- Although *Rosh Hashana* is a day of judgment, we honor the holiday by wearing nice clothing and taking a haircut. This shows our confidence that *HaShem* will have mercy on us and inscribe us for a good year. Our Rabbis of blessed memory write that we should not wear clothing that is too fancy so as not to show ourselves as if we have no fear of *HaShem*'s judgment.

- It is proper for men to immerse in the *Mikveh* on *Ereb Rosh Hashana*.

Laws of Rosh Hashana

- Rosh Hashana begins this year on Friday night, September 18th. On the first night, women should light candles by 6:40 and say "Lehadlik Ner Shel Shabbat Veyom Tov."

- On the second night, light candles after 7:40 pm and say "Lehadlik Ner Shel Yom Tov."
- The prayers of *Rosh Hashana* should be said with joy, with a tune, and with intense concentration. A person should not arouse himself to weep during the prayers of *Rosh Hashana*. However, if the tears come by themselves, there is no prohibition in it.
- On the night of *Rosh Hashana*, we begin saying *Hamelech Hakadosh* instead of *Hakel Hakadosh* in our *Amidah*. This will continue until the end of *Yom Kippur*. If one mistakenly said *Hakel Hakadosh*, and he remembers within a couple of seconds, he must correct himself by saying *Hamelech Hakadosh*. Otherwise, he must begin the *Amidah* anew.
- On the night of *Rosh Hashana*, it is customary to eat certain foods as a sign for a good year, for a sign has significance. Many have the custom to eat these foods the second night as well.
- It is a positive *Torah* commandment to hear the *shofar* blasts on *Rosh Hashana*. The *shofar* is blown after the reading of the *Torah*. Neither the blower nor the listeners may interrupt by speaking between the blasts heard while sitting and those heard while standing.
 - This year the shofar and Tashlich will be on Sunday, September 20th.
- After *Minha*, it is customary to say *Tashlich* near a body of water. This is in order to recall the merit of *Abraham* and *Yishak*. The *Midrash* relates that when *Abraham* was going with *Yishak* to Mount Moriah to bind him as commanded by G-d, the accuser tried to dissuade them.

When that tactic failed, the accuser turned himself into a large impassable river blocking their way. Still, *Abraham* and *Yishak* did not turn back. They entered the water. When it reached their necks, *Abraham* prayed for salvation. G-d rebuked the accuser, and the river disappeared. According to the *Zohar*, the binding of *Yishak* took place on *Rosh Hashana*.

- Women are exempt from *Tashlich*.
- Some recite the entire book of *Tehillim* twice on *Rosh Hashana*.

- One should be careful not to get angry on *Rosh Hashana*. For in addition to the general prohibition of losing one's temper, it is not a good omen for a person to get angry on *Rosh Hashana* since one's behavior on this day sets the tone for the upcoming year.
- The *halachic* authorities are divided as to whether to recite the *Sheheheyanu* blessing in the *Kiddush* of the second night of *Rosh Hashana*. Therefore one should try to have a new fruit on the table. The head of the household then recites *Sheheheyanu* in *Kiddush* while having in mind that the *Berakha* is intended to cover the new fruit. If one does not have a new fruit, one may accomplish the same thing by wearing a new garment. If one has neither a new fruit nor a new garment, one should still recite *Sheheheyanu* in *Kiddush*. Since the second night is on Saturday night, the *Kiddush* consists of 5 Berachot - Yayin, *Kiddush*, Ner, Havdala, and Zeman.

Aseret Yeme Teshuba

While the decision for "another year of life" is handed down on *Rosh Hashana*, the verdict is not "sealed" until *Yom Kippur*. Therefore, the ten days from *Rosh Hashana* to *Yom Kippur* are a crucial period when most peoples' judgment "hangs in the balance." During these "Ten Days of Repentance," each person should examine his deeds and repent from the sins he has committed in the course of the year. It is fitting to adopt extra measures of piety during these days.

- The essence of repentance is to abandon sin. That is, the sinner must desist from doing his sin, remove it from his thoughts, and resolve in his heart never to do it again. Furthermore, he should regret the past.
- A person who repents should not think that he is far from the level of righteousness because of his sins. This is not true. Rather, he is beloved before the Creator as if he had never sinned.
- A person should try to increase his *misvot*, good deeds and charitable donations at this time in order to tip the scales of judgment in his favor. It is good to increase one's study of *Mussar* at this time. Good choices for *Mussar* study are Rabenu Yona's Gates of Repentance and the Rambam's Laws of Repentance.
- One should not think that repentance is necessary only for active sins, such as theft or immorality. Rather, just as one must repent for sinful deeds, so one must

examine his character traits and repent for any anger, animosity, jealousy, mockery, pursuit of money and honor, overindulgence in food, and so forth.

- *Yom Kippur* does not atone for sins that a person commits against his fellow man. It is therefore the universal Jewish custom – some time before *Yom Kippur* -- to apologize and seek forgiveness from any friends, relatives, or acquaintances that we may have harmed or insulted over the past year.
- It is correct for each person to say on *Ereb Yom Kippur* that he forgives everyone who has hurt him physically, mentally or financially.
- It is customary to make *Kaparot* before *Yom Kippur*. That is, a chicken is taken for each member of the family and is slaughtered for atonement.

Yom Kippur

Following the Golden Calf, Moshe Rabenu pleaded with G-d to forgive the Jewish people. Finally, on *Yom Kippur*, G-d forgave them, atonement was achieved and Moshe brought the second set of Tablets down from Mount Sinai. From that day onward, every *Yom Kippur* has carried with it a special power to cleanse the sins of Jews (both individually and collectively) and to wipe the slate clean.

Laws of Ereb Yom Kippur

- There is a *Misvah* to eat and drink more than usual on *Ereb Yom Kippur*. It is proper to minimize one's work on *Ereb Yom Kippur* in order to be able to eat and drink well. Our Rabbis teach us that whoever eats and drinks on the ninth day of *Tishri* is considered to have fasted on both the ninth and tenth of *Tishri*.
- Fasting is forbidden on *Ereb Yom Kippur*.
- It is customary to recite *Selihot* before dawn on *Ereb Yom Kippur*.
- *Tahanun* is said during *Selihot*, but not during *Shaharit* or *Minha*.

- It is customary to make *Hatarat Nedarim on Ereb Yom Kippur*.
- It is proper for men to immerse in a *Mikveh* on *Ereb Yom Kippur*.
- *Minha* is prayed early, before the last meal. Our custom is to wear *Tefillin* during *Minha*.
- One must stop eating and drinking while it is yet day because we must begin the *Yom Kippur* fast fifteen minutes before sunset.
- This year *Yom Kippur* starts on Sunday night, September 27th.
It is a custom that women light candles on *Ereb Yom Kippur*.
The *Beracha* is *Lehadlik Ner Shel Yom Hakippurim*. The *Beracha* of *Sheheheyanu* should not be recited at candle lighting.
- The custom is to light memorial candles in memory of departed relatives.

Laws of Yom Kippur

- On *Yom Kippur*, the following things are forbidden:
 - 1 - Doing *Melachot* (work) - the same like every *Shabbat*.
 - 2 - Eating and Drinking.
 - 3 - Washing oneself.
 - 4 - Anointing oneself.
 - 5 - Wearing leather shoes.
 - 6 - Marital relations.
- On the morning of *Yom Kippur*, the hands should be washed three times alternately and the *Beracha* of *Al Netilat Yadayim* is recited as on any other day. However, the only part of the hand that may be washed is the fingers up to and including the knuckles.
- After relieving oneself, a person washes his fingers up to and including the knuckles and then he recites the *Beracha* of *Asher Yasar*. If his hands are dirty, he may wash as necessary to remove the dirt.

- A person should not wash his face on *Yom Kippur* morning. However, if there is dirt on his face, he may wash the dirty area. He may also slightly wet his eyes to clean them from any mucous.
- A *Kohen* who is about to go up to bless the people washes his fingers up to the end of the knuckles.
- A critically ill person who must eat on *Yom Kippur* washes his fingers up to the end of the knuckles.
- Deodorant is not permitted on *Yom Kippur*.
- Boys and girls under the age of nine are exempt from fasting on *Yom Kippur*, even for just a few hours. Moreover, we do not allow them to fast even if they want to, lest they may be harmed.
- Boys and girls of nine or ten are taught to fast for a few hours. However, we are not allowed to permit them to fast the whole day even if they want to.
- Boys and girls of eleven who are known by their parents to be strong and healthy may fast the entire day. Otherwise, they should fast only until midday.
- Boys of thirteen and girls of twelve are considered adults in every respect and must fast the whole day.
- Pregnant and nursing women are obligated to fast the entire day.
- A woman who is within 72 hours of childbirth when *Yom Kippur* begins, is exempt from fasting even if she says she can fast.
- Someone with special circumstances should consult a Rabbi as the laws are complicated.
- It is customary for men to put on a *Tallit* before *Arbit* of *Yom Kippur* for two reasons: in order to pray with fear, awe, and concentration; and in order to resemble the angels. If the *Tallit* is put on before sunset, one recites the *Beracha*. After sunset, a *Beracha* is not recited.
- The prayers of *Yom Kippur* should be said with concentration and humility, with fear and awe of the day of final judgment. It is correct to pray with

weeping for the heavenly gates of tears were never locked, and prayers with weeping are more readily accepted by G-d.

- We omit the *Beracha* of *She'asa Li Kol Sorchi* from the *Birkot Hashahar*.
- A *Tallit* is put on before *Minha*. One who has removed his *Tallit* for more than a half an hour must recite a *Beracha* before putting it on again.
- One must make *Habdalah* over a cup of wine on *Mosa'eh Yom Kippur*. The *Beracha* over ***Besamim*** is not recited. The *Beracha* of *Bore Meore Ha'esh* should be recited over a fire that was lit on *Ereb Yom Kippur*.
- In the month of *Tishri*, some wait to recite the *Birkat Halebana* until *Mosa'eh Yom Kippur*, because until then we are on trial, and the *Birkat Halebana* must be recited with joy.
- It is a *Misvah* to eat and drink abundantly with joy on *Mosa'eh Yom Kippur* as on *Ereb Yom Kippur*. The *Midrash* teaches that on *Mosa'eh Yom Kippur*, a heavenly voice rings out and says, "Go eat your bread with gladness and drink your wine with a merry heart, for G-d has already accepted your deeds".
- Those who are particular about *Misvot* begin building a *Sukkah* on *Mosa'eh Yom Kippur* in order to go immediately from one *Misvah* to the next.

May HaShem accept our prayers and inscribe us for a healthy and happy New Year!