

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



No. 1

ערב ראש השנה תשע"ה

Rosh Hashana

Rabbi Shimon Hellinger, Editor

Sounding the Shofar

The Baal Shem Tov explained the effect of the *shofar* by the following *mashal*: A king once decided to send his only son to a faraway land in order to benefit by broadening his experience. The prince set out from the royal palace loaded with gold and silver, but he frittered it all on the way to his distant destination and arrived there penniless. The local people, who had never heard of his father, the king, laughed off his claims. Was this a prince?! Unable to bear the suffering any longer, the son decided to make the long trek homeward.

He finally arrived in his homeland, but he had been away for so long that he had even forgotten the local language. The poor tattered fellow tried motioning to the people around him that he was the son of their mighty king, but they mocked him and beat him.

Arriving at the palace gates, the son tried again but was ignored until, in utter despair, he cried aloud so that his father would hear him. The king recognized his son's voice, his love was aroused for him, and he came out to welcome him home.

Similarly, the King, Hashem, sends a neshama, his prince, down to this world to benefit by observing the Torah and fulfilling its mitzvos. However, when hankering after pleasures, the neshama loses all its wealth and arrives at a place where his Father, Hashem, is unknown. Moreover, the neshama forgets how things were Above, and in the long galus, even forgets its own 'language'. In desperation, it cries out by sounding the shofar, expressing regret for the past and determination for the future. This simple cry arouses Hashem's mercy: He shows his love for His only son and forgives him.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev would tell the following *mashal*: A king once lost his way in the forest, until he met a man who directed him out of the forest and back to his palace. He rewarded the stranger richly and appointed him

as a senior minister. Years later, that minister acted rebelliously and was sentenced to death, but the king granted him one last wish. The minister asked that both he and the king put on the clothing they had worn long ago, when he had rescued the king from the forest. This reminded the king of his indebtedness to this man, and he revoked the sentence.

Similarly, we willingly accepted the Torah from the King, Hashem, when all the other nations refused the offer. But since that time, like the minister, we have been rebellious by doing aveiros, and are therefore fearful on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment. So we sound the shofar to remind Hashem of Mattan Torah, when we accepted the Torah and made Hashem our king, and we express our renewed eagerness to crown Him once again. This zechus stands by us: Hashem forgives our aveiros and inscribes us immediately for a good life.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Baal Shem Tov would usually be present for *tekias shofar* together with his *talmidim*. One year he requested one of them, the *tzaddik* Reb Yaakov Yosef of Polonnoye, author of the *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*, to take his place there, while the Baal Shem Tov himself sounded the *shofar* with the simple folk and the children. Those unsophisticated people cried out to Hashem, "Father in Heaven, have *rachmanus*!" And that had the greatest effect of all.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Davening with Fervor

A visitor to the township of Lubavitch describes the first night of Rosh Hashanah: The day is ending and the large *shul* is already packed with chassidim, *orchim*, and hundreds of bochurim and their teachers who have gathered to daven *maariv*. Their faces all express arousal and awe, fearing judgment; all stand together as one, ready to accept this holy day. A few moments pass and the Rebbe Rashab

arrives, his holy face aflame with *merirus*, an intense seriousness, but at the same time shining with an inner *chayus* and *simcha*. Two opposites appear there together.

Maariv is davened earnestly and with *hislahavus*; the *tefillos* soar aloft, piercing the heavens. As I push myself closer to the Rebbe to hear the *tefilla* of a *tzaddik*, the sound of passionate crying and deep sighing reaches my ears. There is not a word of the Rebbe's davening that is not soaked with a river of tears. Never in my life have I heard such soulful crying!

Maariv is over, but no one leaves. The chassidim stand close together and listen intently to every nuance of the Rebbe's *tefilla*. All eyes are focused on one point, making sure not to miss a moment. The Rebbe softly sings a *niggun* with *dveikus*, demanding and pleading, and as his heart bursts with tears, tears also course down the faces of many of the chassidim who are listening in silence – with *teshuva* from the depths of the heart. I think to myself, "If the only reason for the *tefilla* of the *tzaddik* is to arouse thousands of *Yidden* with regret and *teshuvah*, that is enough."

Late at night, when the Rebbe finishes davening and turns to *bentch* all those present with a good, sweet year, his face shines like a malach of Hashem, his eyes radiating light and hope. He passes through the crowd and wishes each person, *Leshana tova tikasev veseichaseim*!

Consider This

What is the difference between our connection to HaShem expressed in the two *meshalim*?

Why did the *tzaddik* experience both seriousness and *simcha* on Rosh Hashana? How is it possible?

Our Sages

Reb Avraham Hamalach

Reb Avraham, known as Reb Avraham Hamalach, was the son of the Mezritcher Maggid and the grandfather of the "Ruzhiner." He was called "the malach" due to his extraordinary loftiness in *avodas Hashem*. When the Baal HaTanya was in Mezritch, they had a close relationship and they learned together as a *chavrusa*. Reb Avraham later lived in the town of Pastuv, near Kiev, and after his passing on the 12th of Tishrei 1776 he was buried there.

Once after learning a deep concept in Pninyus HaTorah, Reb Avraham Hamalach found the Baal HaTanya eating a bagel with butter. In response to Reb Avraham's surprise, how one could sit and eat a good tasting piece of food after having been involved with the sublime, the Baal HaTanya explained: While learning, he had felt that he was reaching the point of *klos hanefesh*, the expiration of the soul, and in order to halt this and keep his soul down here, he ate a bagel with butter.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe explained: Being that the Baal HaTanya brought Elokus to this world, he was therefore not called a malaach. Consequently, it was he and not the malaach who ate the bagel, for the avoda of the malaach was "heaven" and the Baal HaTanya was bringing Elokus into the world.

After the *histalkus* of Reb Avraham, Reb Shlomo Karliner took custody of the Malaach's two children, Reb Sholom and Reb Yisrael Chaim and placed their beds right near his own. As happens by *tzadikim*, different *neshomos* would come to Reb Shlomo for a *tikun*. Once, a certain *neshama* came and, afraid to wake the tzaddik, awoke instead the two children who were about 8 years old. The children woke up frightened, and Reb Shlomo warned the *neshama* not to bother the Rebbe's children, threatening to chase him even further away.

Library Corner

אמרו לפני מלכיות כדי שתמליכוני עליכם

On the eve of Chai Elul a special event took place in our library lead by the world famous lecturer and author, Harav Noson Gurary Shlita, grandson of the Kaphishnitser Rebbe זצ"ל.

Rabbi Gurari emphasized that the main focus and avodah of Rosh Hashanah is that we coronate Hashem as our king in every aspect of our lives, as it says in the Shmoneh Esrei כולו בכבודך.

But then Hashem may ask "If I am your king where were you till now?"

Rabbi Gurari continued with even a greater question.

"Why would an infinite G-D be willing to king over human creatures who are finite and limited? Would a human being ever agree to rule over a nation of mosquitoes? It surely would be below his

dignity!"

Chasidus answers both powerful questions as follows:

Through doing teshuvah and blowing the shofar, we express an intense cry from the most inner core and depth of our heart.

This is the G-dly Jewish soul yearning to return to his Father in Heaven (as mentioned above in the parable of the Baal Shem Tov).

Hashem then decides to accept the coronation to continue with his kingdom and blesses his children and the world with a Shanah Tovah Umesukah!

For many more powerful practical messages for Daily life shared by Rabbi Gurari visit our website.

Halacha Corner

Paying for an Aliya with Ma'aser

May one bid for his aliya in shul with *ma'aser* money?

■ According to the majority of Poskim, *ma'aser* money can only be used for things which a person is not obligated to pay. Something which a person would have to pay up regardless, may not come from *ma'aser*.

For example¹, a community tax for the sake of a *mitzvah* (for example, to build a *mikva* or a *shul*), may not be paid from *ma'aser* money since the person is anyway obligated to pay it. However, if one chooses to contribute extra money to the tax, so that poorer people should have to pay less, *ma'aser* money may be used to pay the extra amount, since he has no obligation on that². Similarly, *matanos loevyonim* on Purim may not come from *ma'aser* money, since it is already an obligation, however extra money added to the *mitzvah* beyond the obligation, may come from *ma'aser* money³.

■ Once one pledged to money for an *aliya*, although the money goes to *tzedaka*, *ma'aser* money may not be used, since the person has already accepted the obligation of paying. On the other hand, one may pledge money for the *aliya* with the intent of paying with *ma'aser* money since he is donating *ma'aser* money for something in which he is not yet obligated⁴. Similarly, if one donates money during the *mi sheberach* that he was not obligated to pay, if the original intention was to give from *ma'aser* money, *ma'aser* money may be used.

■ In the case of an *aliya*, some Poskim⁵ require an additional prerequisite: that *tzedaka* actually **gains** from the pledge. This means that if the price paid for the *aliya* would have been bid by others, the money may not come from *ma'aser*, although that was the original intention, since the *shul* would experience no extra gain from his money. However, if he bids higher than anyone else would have bidden, then the difference may come from *ma'aser* since this is a gain for the *shul*.

■ According to the basic requirement of *halacha*, one can rely on the lenient opinion. Nevertheless, it is advisable not to be overly particular with money for *tzedaka*, as the Baal HaTanya writes⁶ that one who is not exact and gives beyond the requirement, *HaShem* will give him more than he deserves.

1 - ט"ז ס' רמט סק"א. 4 - ט"ז שם.

2 - ראה שו"ת מנחת יצחק ח"ה 5 - של"ה מס' מגילה סוף ענין צדקה ומשפט, הובא בהג"ר רע"א על הט"ז שם.

3 - מג"א ס' תרצ"ד סק"א. 6 - תניא אגה"ק ס' י.

The Baal Shem Tov Library

1709 Avenue J • Brooklyn NY 11230 • 718-677-9000 • www.thebaalshemtovlibrary.com

Library Hours:

Sunday & Thursday: 2:00 pm - 9:30 pm. Monday - Wednesday: 2:00 pm - 10:30 pm.

Coming Soon: Women's Hours, Women's Library, Lending Library