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MOSHE IMPARTS WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT & HOPE

Why Have We Not Succeeded at Being a Role Model for the World?

Torah: “Is it to Hashem that you do this, O vile and unwise people? Is He not your Father, your Master? Has He not created you and firmed you?”

Targum Onkeles: The wisdom of the Jewish people is the *Torah* because it is G-d’s Wisdom and the only prescription for their spiritual development. Yet they are not wise because they do not appreciate nor adhere to it. The *Midrash* refers to the *Torah* itself as a “*Chemda Ganuza* – a Hidden Treasure,” that preceded existence for more than 900 generations. G-d gave it to the *Klal Yisroel* because they descend from the Patriarchs and have great spiritual potential. However, possessing something of such special value and not using it is the ultimate in foolishness.

On the Festivals in the *Amidah*: “You (G-d) have chosen us from all the peoples; You loved us and found favor

in us; You exalted us above all the tongues and You sanctified us with Your Commandments...”

Directly following this: “Our G-d and G-d of our Forefathers, may they rise, come, reach, be noted, be favored, be heard, be considered, and remembered – the remembrance and consideration of ourselves... (the *yaaleh v’yavo*).” Why does this verse follow the one that describes G-d’s reasons for choosing us to be His people through the giving of the *Torah*?

Yisod V’Shoresh HaAvodah: If because of His love and desire for us G-d chose the Jewish people to be His Nation, elevated us above all the other nations of the world and sanctified us through His *Mitzvos*, then how could we have failed to such a degree? After G-d put the Jews on such a lofty pedestal through the Sinai experience how could we have justified not adhering to His *Torah*? Since we are culpable to this degree for our lack of appreciation and insensitivity for the

mitzvos, we beseech G-d to remember all the merits pertaining to *Klal Yisroel* as far back as the merits of the Patriarchs (*Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov*).

Sforno: The Jewish people were meant to be the role model for the nations of the world through our dedication to G-d; however, we failed in that capacity by initially worshiping the Golden Calf (*Aigel HaZahav*). We diminished our own ability to function in this way.

It is interesting to note that until the onset of Christianity the concept of moral and ethical behavior did not exist in the non-Jewish world. The non-Jew was a barbarian and predator with no understanding of *chesed* (kindness) or compassion. It is only after Christianity culled from the *Torah* the elements of humanism and disseminated it to the masses did they have a semblance of moral and ethical beings.

However, the role of the Jew vis-à-vis the world at large goes beyond being the moral and ethical model. The Jew's ethical and moral behavior and communal responsibilities are Divinely Ordained just as all of the other precepts of the *Torah*. Observing *Shabbos* and dietary laws, as well as giving charity to the poor, are all dictates of the *Torah* and do not emanate from the Jew's compassion or his own understanding of what is proper.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: If a Jew realizes that he is wearing *shatnes* (a combination of wool and linen that is forbidden by the *Torah*) he must immediately remove the *shatnes* garment, even though he will be naked in a public setting. One may ask – how could this be, what about the issue of human dignity? The only basis for human dignity comes from following the instructions of the *Torah*. If the *Torah* Commands us to remove our clothing because of the prohibition of wearing *shatnes* (regardless of the setting), then this becomes proper behavior. Human dignity means to live as G-d wants the human being to live.

The failing of the Jew throughout the ages has been his lack of appreciation for his heritage. If he would understand the value and the purpose of his own existence relating to G-d, he would behave differently. The ten-day period between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, known as the Ten Days of Penitence, is a time when our prayers are received immediately (as explained by *Rambam* in the *Laws of Teshuvah*). We should pray for ourselves and for all of *Klal Yisroel* to have clarity, appreciate and understand our value to G-d and re-dedicate ourselves to the *Torah*.

What is the Ultimate Rehabilitative Process of Teshuvah?

Bereishis: “*Bereishis bara Elokeem es ha’shamaiyim v’es ha’aretz; v’ha’aretz hoysa tohu v’vochu v’choshech al panei tahom v’ruach Elokeem merachefes al panei ha’mayim.*” In the beginning of G-d’s creating the heavens and the earth – when the earth was empty, with darkness upon the surface of the deep, and the Divine Presence hovered upon the surface of the waters.

Midrash: Each of the words in this opening verse of the *Torah* alludes to events that will take place in the future. Meaning, when G-d created existence, He preordained that certain events will happen. “*V’ha’aretz hoysa tohu* – and the earth was empty,” refers to the Babylonian exile. “*Choshech* – darkness,” refers to the Greek exile; as the *Talmud* tells us, “they blackened our eyes with their decrees.” “*Al panei tahom* – surface of the deep” alludes to the Roman exile, which is seemingly as endless as the “deep” source of water. (We are still experiencing the Roman exile after more than 2,000 years.)

Midrash: “*V’ruach Elokeem merachefes al panei ha’mayim* – the Divine Presence hovered upon the surface of the waters” is ascribed to the spirit of *Moshiach* who will come only in the merit of *teshuvah* (repentance) which is compared to water (*mayim*). As it is stated in *Eicha*, “Your heart should gush forth water when you stand before *Hashem*.”

Rambam in *Hilchos Teshuvah*: The confession that one makes during *teshuvah* must be in the presence of *Hashem*. What relevance does *teshuvah* have to water? Why is the statement “hovered upon the surface of the waters” an allusion to *teshuvah*? If one attempts to do *teshuvah* but does not totally sever himself from his sinful past, then his *teshuvah* process is equivalent to immersing in a *mikvah* (ritual pool) for the sake of purification, while still holding on to a rodent, which is the source of his spiritual contamination.

Rambam is comparing the *teshuvah* process to the *mikvah* itself. However, the verse from *Eicha*, which is cited by the *Midrash*, is indicating that the water itself is not the *teshuvah* but rather a consequence of the *teshuvah*. As it says, “your heart will gush forth water.”

If one is spiritually contaminated, he must immerse himself completely in a *mikvah* in order to achieve spiritual purity. The *Halacha* (law) dictates that if there

is as much as one hair of his body that is not under water, he is not purified. The desired result is only achieved when one totally dunks himself. How do we understand the purification process of the *mikvah*?

Maharal of Prague: Humanity exists on dry land and not under water; therefore, the latter represents non-existence. When a person immerses himself in a body of water, in essence, he enters into a state of non-being. When he emerges, he enters a state of existence and is considered a "*bria chadasha* – a new being." As such, whatever contamination he had prior to the immersion, no longer applies to him.

Dovid HaMelech in *Tehillim*: "A broken and shattered heart *Elokeem* (G-d) will not disgrace."

Rabbeinu Yona in *Shaarei Teshuvah*: The *teshuvah* process only has meaning because of the Attribute of Mercy (*Midas HaRachamim*). However, within the context of *Midas HaDin* (The attribute of Justice) there is no place for *teshuvah*. *Dovid* revealed to us that if the person is truly broken and shattered, as a result of the *teshuvah* process, even *Elokeem* (the Attribute of Justice) will not disgrace (reject) this person's *teshuvah*.

Torah: An earthenware vessel (after becoming contaminated) cannot be purified in a *mikvah*. In order for it to become uncontaminated, it must be broken or shattered so it loses its function as a vessel. If it is reassembled, it is considered a new creation that does not have relevance to the original vessel – and therefore it is pure.

The same holds true for a person. If he is broken and remorseful because of his sins and does *teshuvah*, he is forgiven because when he is broken he is the equivalent of the nonexistent person. Therefore, after the process of *teshuvah*, the individual is a new person. Thus, because the sinner no longer exists, even the Attribute of Justice cannot prosecute the penitent.

Tefillah of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*: We are likened to a broken shard - "earthenware vessel." We identify with the purification process of the earthenware vessel because - "A broken heart *Elokeem* (G-d) will not disgrace." We can now understand why the *Midrash* compares the process of *teshuvah* with water. Just as when one immerses into the water, entering into a non-existent state and he emerges pure, so too does one need to be broken and remorseful to the point that one's heart gushes forth water (tears) to indicate

that he is totally broken. Thus, the "water" referred to in the *Torah* "hovered upon the surface of the waters" is synonymous with the broken state of man when he is in a process of *teshuvah*.

What is the Significance of the Seventy Root Nations of the World?

Torah: "When the Supreme One gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of man, He set the borders of the peoples according to the number of the Children of *Yisroel*. For *Hashem's* portion is His people; *Yaakov* is the measure of His inheritance." Meaning, when G-d established the nations of the world, He did so in accordance with the number of members of *Yaakov's* family who came to Egypt. The *Torah* tells us that the reason there are seventy nations of the world is that there were seventy individuals of *Yaakov's* family who descended to Egypt. How do we understand this?

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: When G-d created *Adam* (the first Man), he was created as a spiritually pure being. Because of his purity, all of his descendants would be spiritually pure. However, there existed a representation of evil in the world – the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. When *Adam* ate of the Tree of Knowledge, he lost his pure state because it became intermingled with Evil. Thus, all of his decedents were born with an intermingling of Good and Evil. It was not until *Yaakov Avinu* (our Patriarch) that spiritual purity was reestablished because he was able to purge himself completely of the impurity, which was inherited from *Adam*.

Consequently, *Yaakov* produced seventy offspring who were endowed with pure souls. With this explanation, we can understand the *Gemara* in Tractate *Bava Metzia* that tells us that the radiance of *Yaakov* had a semblance to the radiance of *Adam*. Meaning, that *Yaakov* possessed a purity that was similar to *Adam's* original state. On the contrary, the seventy nations of the world remained spirituality impaired because of the intermingling of Good and Evil. Because of their make-up, the nations of the world are diametrically opposed to the existence of *Yaakov* and his family – who were seventy in number.

We see that by G-d's design, the Jewish people are meant to be the counterbalance to the nations of the world. The role of the Jew is to have a positive influence on the spirituality of the nations of the world

and not to be influenced by them. This is why G-d created seventy nations to correspond to the seventy descendants of *Yaakov*.

Sforno in *Shemos*: When the *Torah* refers to the seventy descendants of *Yaakov*, it only identifies *Yaakov's* children by name and not his other descendants. *Sforno* explains that by identifying them by name, the *Torah* is indicating that each son had his own unique dimension of spirituality. Although all seventy members of *Yaakov's* family were special, they were not on the same level as his twelve sons.

Maharal in *Gevuras Hashem*: The slavery and bondage in Egypt did not commence to any degree until the passing of *Yaakov Avinu*. Because of *Yaakov Avinu's* great dimension, the Evil influences in Egypt could not erode the spiritual standing of *Yaakov* and his family. However, the moment *Yaakov* passed away, the bondage in Egypt began to evolve and was finally implemented when his entire generation passed away. It was at that time that the impurity of Egypt was able to spiritually entomb the Jewish people and cause them to lose contact with their holiness. If G-d had not taken the Jewish people out of Egypt when He did, they would have been lost forever.

It is interesting to note that world events seem to revolve around the Jewish people, despite the fact that we are so few in number. How is it possible that billions of people take notice of an innocuous number of Jews (7 billion humans vs. 13 million Jews)? Evidently, the world at large is pitted against the essence of the Jew. There is a spiritual tug-of-war between the Jewish people and the nations of the world. This is the battle between *Esav* and *Yaakov*.

G-d Throughout the Ages Has Demonstrated His Love for Us

Selichos: "Do with us as You promised us: And despite all that (all of our failings), when they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have despised them nor abhorred them to destroy them, to annul My covenant with them, for I am *Hashem* their G-d." Despite all of the shortcomings of the Jewish people and the many exiles and tragedies they have experienced, how did G-d demonstrate to them that He did not "despise them nor abhor them"?

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: The meaning of the verse "he did not despise them" is referring to the Babylonian exile. During this trying time He sent them *Daniel*, *Chananya*, *Meshael*, and *Azarya*. *Chananya*, *Meshael*, and *Azarya* were thrown into the fiery kiln because they would not bow to the image of Nebuchadnezzar (the Babylonian Emperor who destroyed the First *Bais HaMikdash*). In addition, G-d sent them *Daniel* who was thrown into the lion's den. Meaning, that G-d demonstrated that He did not "despise" the Jewish people because of their sins and he sent them the gift of special *Torah* leaders such as *Daniel*, *Chananiya*, *Meshael*, and *Azarya*.

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah* continues: He did not "abhor" the Jewish people because He also sent the *Hashmanaim* and *Mattisyahu*, (who were responsible for the miracle of *Chanukah*), during the Greek exile. He sent *Mordechai* and *Esther* who saved them from *Haman* the Wicked who had decreed that every Jewish man, woman and child should be annihilated (the miracle of *Purim*). Had it not been for these special individuals, the Jews would have become completely assimilated or destroyed.

The *Gemara* concludes that the meaning of "not to annul His Covenant" is referring to the Persian exile when G-d presented the Jewish people with *Reb Yehudah HaNasi* (Judah the Prince) who was the redactor of the Oral Law. The Oral interpretation of the *Torah* would have been forgotten had it not been for Judah the Prince compiling it into the *Mishnah*. We refer to Judah as, *Rabbeinu Ha'Kadosh* (Our Holy Rabbi). He is the only person, other than Moshe, who we call our Rabbi, "*Rabbeinu*" to indicate his greatness.

Although the Jewish people had many spiritual shortcomings and experienced many exiles and tragedies, G-d nevertheless demonstrated His love for us by providing us with special *Torah* leadership who gave their respective generations the necessary understanding of their heritage. If it were not for these leaders, we would have been assimilated – G-d Forbid. Thus demonstrating - "...I will not have despised them nor abhorred them to destroy them..."

Gemara: If one prays for a fellow Jew to have his need fulfilled, which is identical to his own, G-d will give priority to the need of the one who is praying on behalf of his fellow. Unfortunately, there are more Jews unaffiliated with Judaism than those who are; and

those who are connected can always use an upgrade in their level of commitment. What do we do for our unaffiliated brethren and what do we do for ourselves to be able to advance our own Judaism? If a Jew truly understood who he is and what his heritage is, he would definitely become involved in *Torah* study and *mitzvah* observance. It is only because of a lack of Jewish education and understanding that Jews drift away. We must pray that our fellow Jew be given the understanding and appreciation for our heritage.

Mishnah in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: Whoever saves the life of a single Jew it is as if he had saved the entire world. Therefore, if one saves a Jew spiritually, the value is the equivalent to saving the entire world and it will impact upon his progeny until the end of time.

G-d's Love for the Jewish People

Torah: At the end of time the Jewish people will eventually do *teshuvah* and return to G-d. As a result of this, G-d will bring forth great blessing to the Jews and He will, "...return to rejoice (*I'sus*) over you (the *Klal Yisroel*) for good, as He rejoiced (*sos*) over your forefathers, when you listen to the voice of *Hashem*, your G-d..." The *Torah* uses the term "*sos*" to refer to the joy that G-d will feel at this time. Why does the *Torah* use the term "*sos*" rather than "*simcha*" or many other expressions of rejoicing?

Dovid HaMelech in *Tehillim*: "I rejoice (*sos*) over your words (the *Torah*) as if I found a large amount of spoils." *Dovid HaMelech* could have expressed his joy over the *Torah* and *mitzvos* with other terms, however, he specifically chose this term.

Vilna Gaon z'tl: The word "*simcha*" indicates joy that is complete, while the term "*sos*" denotes a happiness that is incomplete. He explains this through the following parable. In order for the king to reward his loyal subject for his service, he allows him to enter into his royal treasury and take whatever his heart desires but only for a period of five minutes. The subject is joyful and thankful that he will be allowed to take whatever he wants from the royal treasury. However, he is also anguished by the time constraint he is given because he understands the opportunity at hand.

Vilna Gaon z'tl: Similarly, *Dovid HaMelech* rejoiced over the *Torah* that he was given because he understood its infinite value. However, at the same time he

was distressed by the fact that he was restricted to seventy years and would not be able to partake of this treasure beyond that point. With this explanation we can understand why the *Torah* uses the term "*sos*" to express G-d's joy and not the term "*simcha*." G-d loves the Jewish people to such a degree that even though so much blessing is bestowed upon us, He is pained that He could not give us more. Since G-d is infinite with no restrictions, He wants to provide us with boundless blessing as well but because of our own limitations, He is unable to do so.

If G-d loves the Jews to such a degree that it gives him pain not to be able to do more for us, then we should understand that when He denies us His Goodness, it is clearly in our best interest. Now we can somewhat appreciate the idea that because of G-d's unending love for us that even when we experience a set back in life we can understand that it emanates from His Goodness and not from vindictiveness. If He could give us more, He would. Therefore, the *Mishnah* states, "Just as one blesses G-d for good fortune, he must bless Him for misfortune." Because of his unlimited love for the Jewish people, He does only what is good and necessary for us.

Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl: If punishment and suffering are necessary as part of the rehabilitative spiritual process (which is only in our best interest), then why should one pray to G-d to heal him when he becomes ill? Does one ask the doctor to withhold a life-saving procedure when the only road to recovery is through that procedure? If so, then how do we understand the blessing of the *Amidah* – "Heal us *Hashem* and allow us to recover"?

Reb Chaim: Although G-d brings illness upon a person as part of the rehabilitation of his spirituality (which is a positive thing), G-d is nevertheless affected by the fact that the Jew is in a state of suffering. It is similar to a parent who needs to assist the doctor when he performs a painful procedure to his child. The parent is joyful that the child will recover through this procedure; however, the parent feels the hurt of his child. Therefore, if one prays for healing because he feels G-d's pain (as a father to a child – and even to a greater degree) then that feeling itself becomes the rehabilitative process that causes the person to be deserving of recovery. One can only relate to G-d's pain (when a Jew is in a state of suffering) if one understands to what degree G-d loves the Jewish people.

The Capability of Man

Torah: "I call heaven and earth today to bear witness against you: I have placed life and death before you..."

Midrash: *Moshe* is saying to the *Klal Yisroel* "Heaven and earth were created to accommodate mankind and that they have never deviated from their function. Did one ever plant a wheat kernel and have it grow barley? Heaven and earth are not subject to reward and punishment and yet they do not deviate from the purpose for which they were created. Therefore *Klal Yisroel* who is rewarded for doing good and punished for doing evil, definitely should not deviate (from the purpose for which they were created)."

Chazal: The laws of nature operate in a specific manner because G-d chose their functions to help mankind to maximize its purpose, which is to choose between good and evil. Just as G-d created heaven and earth with all the ingredients necessary to help mankind fulfill its purpose, so too did He create the human being with all the capability to fulfill his purpose. What is the purpose of man? To serve G-d – to sublimate and subordinate the physical to the spiritual, despite one's inclination for the material. Therefore, man was given the capability to bring about that result.

Torah: G-d provides man with all that is necessary to fulfill his purpose; and the mechanism that is needed to succeed and advance spiritually is the *Torah* itself. Just as the heavy rains pierce the ground to sustain the tree (through its roots) and just as the dew continuously covers the vegetation of the earth to bring about blessing and sustain existence, so too did G-d give us the *Torah* which is the equivalent of both rain and dew to sustain our spirituality.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The Written Law (*Torah Sh'Bichsav*) is equivalent to rain because it is tangible as the rain is visible. However, the Oral Law (*Torah Sh'Bal Peh*), which is communicated verbally, is as unnoticed as the dew when it is falling. Just as G-d gave rain and the dew to sustain existence so too did He give us the Written and Oral Law to sustain our spiritual existence. Therefore a person cannot say that it is too difficult to do the Will of G-d, because He provided us with whatever is necessary to bring that about.

Pirkei Avos: "Im ein Kemach, ein Torah (If there is no flour, there is no Torah)." Meaning that one cannot study *Torah* if he does not have material sustenance; Therefore, G-d

provides it. Otherwise, one can say that he cannot study *Torah* because of his personal circumstance.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: "If there is no flour, it is an indication that there is no *Torah*." If one toils and does not succeed then it is an indication that he is not pursuing *Torah* - because if he were, then G-d would provide for him adequately.

We must be cognizant of events that we experience in our lives. These are indications which give us direction and understanding on whether we are on the proper path or have gone astray. We need to understand why there are difficulties and tragedies on a personal and communal level. If *Klal Yisroel* is not succeeding spiritually then there is no material success. However if *Klal Yisroel*, as a whole, is functioning as a spiritual entity, then G-d will provide whatever material success is needed to accommodate our purpose in existence.

Does the Jew Have the Ability to Empower G-d?

Torah: "You have weakened the Rock (referring to G-d) which gave birth to you, and forgot G-d who brought you forth." There are a number of commentators who explain this verse in many ways.

Sforno: that the *Torah* is saying that if the Jew's focus in life is materialism, then his understanding of G-d, (The Rock), will become weakened because he is distracted from his spirituality.

Zohar: When G-d informed the angels that He was going to create man, their response was that man is deficient and not even worth mentioning – because he is prone to fail. G-d nevertheless created man and punished the angels who opposed this.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The verse "You have weakened the Rock..." is referring to G-d's position that man's existence is worthwhile. However, if man fails, then he weakens G-d's position in his defense.

Rashi: It is referring to the fact that G-d bestows existence with His blessing; however, if man should fail in the spiritual realm, then G-d will withhold His blessing because the Jewish people are not deserving. Therefore, the *Torah* is saying, "You have weakened the Rock..."

When the *meraglim* (the spies) returned from scouting out the Land of Canaan, they reported that they had

seen the decedents of the giants and other untenable situations. They had said that the nations of *Canaan* “are stronger than Him.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The spies were actually saying that the tribes of *Canaan* were even stronger than G-d. They believed that G-d was able to defeat and destroy the Egyptians, but the Canaanites had thirty-one kingdoms and G-d did not have the power to destroy them. How do we understand this? The spies themselves participated in the Sinai event and prophesied while in an awake state. After understanding the awesomeness and capability of G-d, how is it possible for them to say that He is not able to defeat thirty-one kingdoms?

Based on *Rashi's* interpretation of the verse, “You have weakened the Rock...” we are able to understand what the spies were saying. G-d’s level of interaction with this existence is based on the Jew’s merit. If the Jew adheres to the *Torah* and does the Will of G-d then he is deserving of His blessing; however, if the Jew fails and is undeserving, then G-d withholds His blessing and does not allow the Jew to succeed. Meaning, that G-d binds Himself to the principle of “reward and punishment.”

The spies believed that the Jews had sufficient merit to be redeemed from the enslavement of Egypt; however, they believed that they did not have sufficient merit to allow G-d to bring about the conquest of thirty-one kingdoms of *Canaan*. Their understanding was that the infrastructure of “reward and punishment” – the principle of being deserving - was put in place by G-d to govern existence and was established in a way that even G-d Himself was not able to override the system. However, this was/is not the case. Despite one’s unworthiness, if G-d should choose to interact with existence in a positive manner, then He overrides the system.

The *Menorah* in the *Bais HaMikdash* was placed outside of the Holy of Holies, on the other side of the *paroches* (curtains) which was the separation between the Covered Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies.

Torah: “The *Menorah* must be placed outside of the *paroches*.”

Midrash: G-d is actually saying, “You must put the *Menorah* outside the Holy of Holies (which is the location of the Divine Presence) so that you should not mistakenly think that I need your light.” *Moshe* asked G-d, “Why do you want us to kindle the lights of the *Menorah* since You are the light of the world?” G-d responded by

saying,” The reason I want you to kindle the light is to elevate you in the eyes of the nations of the world - that they should see that I do need your light.”

It seems that the two statements of G-d are contradictory. On one hand G-d says the *Menorah* must be placed outside of “My location” (the Holy of Holies) to indicate that He does not need our light. On the other hand, His response to *Moshe* is that in fact He does need our light. Under normal circumstances the world functions within the context of reward and punishment. If we succeed spiritually then G-d bestows blessing on the world. In other words, our “light” is needed because it determines the level on which the world functions. However, if we should fail spiritually, then G-d’s blessing is withdrawn and the world is diminished. Seemingly, from this one could believe that the *Klal Yisroel* empowers G-d.

However this is not the case, because if G-d chooses to override the system, He is not limited or bound by any criteria. This is indicated by the location of where the *Menorah* is placed: “it must be outside of the *paroches* to indicate that I do not need your light. - I am able to bestow blessing, regardless of your unworthiness.”

Torah: There will be peace in the Land when the *Klal Yisroel* will follow the Statutes of *Hashem*. Is there no peace today because of the reality of antisemitism “*Esav sonei l’Yaakov* – *Esav* despises the existence of *Yaakov*” or is it because the Jewish people are not adhering to the Dictates of the *Torah*? If the Jewish people were to follow the ways of the *Torah*, then they would strengthen “the Rock”; however, if we as Jews falter, then He becomes “the Rock that we have weakened.”

Why is the Jew Held to Such a High Standard Especially on Rosh Hashanah?

Mishna in Tractate *Rosh Hashanah*: A *Shofar* cannot be made from the horn of a cow. The *Gemara* explains this by giving two reasons. The first reason is that the horn of a cow is referred to as “*keren*” and not “*Shofar*.” Secondly, there is a principle “*Ein kateigor naaseh sanheigor* – that a prosecutor cannot be an advocate.” The horn of the cow represents the Golden Calf (*Chet HaAigel*) with which the Jews sinned at Sinai. Anything, which has relevance to the Golden Calf must be avoided at a time when we are in need of an advocate. The cow or gold arouses the most serious level of prosecution against the *Klal Yisroel*.

On *Yom Kippur*, the *Kohen Gadol* (the High Priest) officiated with two sets of vestments. He would wear the golden ones when he performed the service that was not specific to *Yom Kippur*. When he performed the service that was particular to *Yom Kippur*, he wore white vestments. He was not permitted to wear the golden vestments for the *Yom Kippur* service because he had to enter the Holy of Holies (the location of the *Shechina* – the Divine Presence) to atone for the *Klal Yisroel*, and if he wore gold, then he could not function in the capacity of an advocate.

Gemara: Since the principle of “a prosecutor cannot be an advocate” has no relevance outside of the location of the *Shechina*, then why can’t we utilize the horn of a cow to fulfill our obligation of *Shofar* since this *mitzvah* is also performed outside of the Holy of Holies? When one blows the *Shofar* it is considered as if he is standing inside the Holy of Holies. How do we understand this?

Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgment (*Yom HaDin*). The *Midas HaDin* (the Attribute of Justice) of G-d is so exacting on this Day that even the angels in heaven tremble from its awesomeness. *Midas HaDin* subjects all of existence to an exact level of scrutiny.

The Second *Bais HaMikdash* (the Second Temple), which stood for 420 years, had more than 300 *Kohanim Gadolim* (High Priests) officiating over this period. However, the First *Bais HaMikdash*, which stood for a period of 410 years, had only eleven.

Gemara: If the *Kohen Gadol* was not fully spiritually qualified, he would expire immediately when he entered into the Holy of Holies. This occurred because being so close to the *Shechina* (the Divine Presence), if he was not in a perfect state, he would be subject to *Midas HaDin*. It is evident from this that when *Midas HaDin* is functioning in its most potent form it is an indication of our close proximity to the *Shechina*. Therefore, *Rosh Hashanah*, which is the *Yom HaDin* (Day of Judgment), is an indication of how close we are to G-d.

On one hand, the Judgment of G-d is awesome and fearful, causing the angels in heaven to tremble. However, on the other hand, His closeness to us reveals the degree to which we are valued. Being in such proximity to the Divine Presence on *Rosh Hashanah* is the equivalent to standing in the Holy of Holies. Therefore, we do not fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Shofar* with a cow’s horn because the principle of “a prosecutor cannot be an advocate” is in force, just as it was for the *Kohen Gadol*; This is unlike *Yom Kippur*, when he was the only one permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies.

It is stated that the *Shofar* should be taken from a ram because it symbolizes the ultimate submission and sacrifice for G-d. When *Avraham Avinu* (*Avraham* our Patriarch) was told by G-d to bring his only son (*Yitzchak*), who he loved, as a sacrifice, he did not hesitate and immediately embarked on that mission.

However, after the binding of *Yitzchak*, an angel called from heaven and told him not to slaughter his son. At that moment *Avraham* noticed a ram caught in the thicket and prepared it to be brought as a sacrifice in the place of his son *Yitzchak*. As a result, G-d valued the sacrifice of the ram as if *Avraham* had sacrificed his own son. Therefore, the ram’s horn symbolizes the most advanced level of dedication and sacrifice to G-d.

When *Satan*, the prosecutor of the Jewish people, begins his prosecution, he is silenced by the sound of the ram’s horn because it is the ultimate advocate of the *Klal Yisroel*. Understanding the gravity of the Day of Judgment, we must also recognize G-d’s exceptional love for us, which is the basis for the Attribute of Justice. Despite the awesomeness of the day, the Jew must feel fortunate that we are in this situation because of His closeness to us.



Yad Avraham Institute