



Crowning our King: The Personal and National Goals of Rosh Hashanah

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What is the goal of Rosh Hashanah?
We know that this holiday is commonly called Yom Hadin, Judgment Day. The Gemara learns from the verse in Devarim (11:12), that God's eyes are on the land from the beginning of the year until the end, and that what happens throughout the year is decided at its beginning. David Hamelech describes Rosh Hashanah (Tehillim 81) as a day of judgment for the God of Yaakov. The Mishnah in Masechet Rosh Hashanah (16a) tells us that on this day each creation comes before God for his fate to be decided.

The message here is that on the first day of every year, in commemoration of the creation of the world, God takes a look at all of His Creations in order to evaluate the degree to which they have accomplished their reason for being created, and to determine what will be needed for the coming year.

We could easily say that this description answers our question; that the goal of Rosh Hashanah is to judge creation. However that is God's goal on this day, not ours. The Creator utilizes this day to assess all of His Creations, but then what is our role, as the creations themselves?

It could be that this day is to be used as a day of repentance and reflection, to atone for past sins and set a course of improvement - but the prayers of Rosh Hashanah do not reflect these sentiments. There is no mention of sin in the Rosh Hashanah davening, and we do not have any prayers asking for forgiveness. In addition, the reflective *viduy* that some people say every day, and that is said by all

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several times throughout the Yom Kippur davening, is missing. So what is reflected in the davening of Rosh Hashanah?

The dual themes of Rosh Hashanah

The tefilot of Rosh Hashanah express two main themes: judgment and *malchut*, the kingship of God. Two questions jump out at us. Firstly, what does it mean that Hashem is our king, is it not enough that he is our God? Secondly, what is the

relationship between these two themes of judgment and kingship?

The Gemara in Masechet Rosh Hashanah (32a) brings down an argument between Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi and Raban Shimon Ben Gamliel regarding the order of the blessings during the Musaf silent prayer. Everyone agrees that the prayer has to begin with the three regular blessings of praise and end with the three regular blessings of gratitude. Furthermore, everyone agrees on an additional four blessings, one for the essence of the day, kedushat hayom, and one each for Malchuyot, Zichronot (God's Judgment), and Shofarot. Both sides also agree on the fact that there must be nine blessings in the prayer, however ten essential blessings were just listed, meaning two of them must be combined, and therein stems the rabbinical argument.

Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi believes that the blessing for the day should be combined with Malchuyot (kingship), while Raban Shimon Ben Gamliel believes it should be together with Zichronot (judgment). Rav Soloveitchik is quoted (Harirei Kedem) to have explained that their argument is not a technical one, but rather a fundamental disagreement as to the essence of Rosh ►

► Hashanah. While both parties agree on the importance of both aspects of Rosh Hashanah, Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi believes that the main theme of Rosh Hashanah is the kingship of God, whereas Raban Shimon Ben Gamliel understands that God's judgment is the main focus.

So - is it a day of judgment, thereby demonstrating the fact that God is our King? Or, is it the day that we declare God as our King, thereby causing it to become a day of judgment? Raban Shimon Ben Gamliel would stand by the former, while Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi would agree with the latter. Today, the custom is to follow the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, and place Malchuyot in the spotlight.

The emphasis on God's Kingship is not only found in the Musaf prayer, but throughout the entirety of the Rosh Hashanah davening. After Maariv, we say Tehillim 24, where we emphasize the fact that God is the King of Honour. Before shofar-blowing, we say Tehillim 47, which describes the Jewish people and all the nations of the world declaring God as King, together with happiness, song, and shofar blasts. In Masechet Rosh Hashanah (16a), it describes how, just as the shofar was blown as part of the crowning process of Jewish kings, on Rosh Hashanah we blow the shofar with the purpose of proclaiming God as our ultimate King. Thus, blowing the shofar on this holiday is another way that the Kingship of God permeates the day.

We still have to understand, though, what it means to declare God as our King. Why is it not enough to see him as our God? And why does God need us to anoint Him?

Crowning the King

God is described as King in many places throughout Tanach, but the first time He receives this name is after the splitting of the sea, when the people of Israel declared "God will rule as King forever" (Shemot 16:18). What caused the giving of this new title, why now? Throughout many Jewish works there is an expression, "there is no king without a

The Torah values we possess are those needed to perfect the world, to bring all of creation to reach its purpose.

nation". In other words, the Godliness of God has nothing to do with us, but the Kingship of God is entirely dependent on how much we - His Creations - relate to Him as King. This is why the Torah does not call Him a King until the people of Israel declare Him as such, after being led out of Egypt. Before that point, there was no nation to accept Him, and therefore there was no kingship.

This concept of the nation of Israel making God into a King is brought to the next level at the time of Shlomo Hamelech. Shlomo was a king who brought the Jewish people to their spiritual and material prime. When Shlomo became king, the Navi describes it as "sitting on the throne of God". How can Shlomo's throne be called the throne of God? The Jewish People live by the values of God, not only as individuals but

as a nation - they demonstrate the fact that God was accepted by his people - thereby making him King. In other words, the Kingship of God is a demonstration of an actualization of His Will and Values by His Nation.

There are many values and ideals that we, as individuals, hold dear. The vast majority of us have our priorities straight: family before work, responsibility before pleasure, spiritual wellbeing before material. The problems, however, arise as we attempt to make those ideals into reality. The concept of Malchut, then, is the ability to actualize all these important values and ideals.

So, too, as a nation we have so much to offer the world. The Torah values we possess are those needed to perfect the world, to bring all of creation to reach its purpose. The problem, then, is that that these values are not easily translated into reality. Rosh Hashanah is the day when we anoint God as our King, and when we take upon ourselves a renewed devotion to realizing our hopes and dreams - the actualization of God's will and values - that we, as a nation and as individuals, have to offer.

God created the world in order for His Will to become a reality. It is our responsibility to choose God as our King, and without this choice, God's Kingdom will not be realized. This is what we are judged for on this day: to what degree did we choose to allow the values that God wants to bring to the world to be become a reality?

Wishing everyone a year of blessing and happiness, and much success in realizing all our hopes and dreams. 🌟

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Rosh Hashanah: The Day of Contradictions

Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Rahamim Zini

Founder and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Or Vishua, Haifa

The day that the Torah calls the “Day of Shofar Blowing” is the most surprising out of all the festivals which we celebrate, as it is the one with the most contradictions. It is literally called the “beginning of the year” but the date is the first of the seventh month. In Parashat Emor, it is listed as merely another Jewish festival, but it is actually The Day of Judgement!

Throughout our long exile, it has been known as a day of fear and trepidation, but in the days of Ezra Hasofer, it was a day of great joy and we were told to give each other gifts, similar to the holiday of Purim!

Chazal tell us to wear white to show our trust that we will be forgiven, taken from the pasuk: “If your sins prove to be like crimson, they will become white as snow.” (Yeshayahu 1:18), but the Rama adds that white clothes are to remind us that it is a terrifying day of judgement!

Hashem says that the sound of the shofar is happy: “...and on this your joyous days... Your trumpets will sound...” (Bamidbar 10:10), but Chazal in Masechet Rosh Hashanah see the sounds of the shofar as cries of woe. If the sound of the Shofar is supposed to be happy, why then the sound of sighs and sadness?!

There is a purpose for all these contradictions, as our lives, as well, are full of them. It is not by chance that the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom

Kippur are known as the “Days of Awe”; the ‘awe’ not being bad per se, but rather a combination of benevolence and judgement. These are days when Hashem is close to us.

Precisely on the day when we ask Hashem for long life, we should think of ways to emphasize all the aspects of our complex lives. We can address and understand each of the above issues as follows:

Hashem’s wisdom put Rosh Hashanah

It is through the inherent complexities of the holiday that we find our strength to face another year

at the precise time of mid-year, as it connects the past with the future; a way to start a new page and jump to a brighter future. In order to look forward we have to look back at our failures, put ourselves in the middle of the path between reflecting on our mistakes and the hoping for a good and ideal future.

Rosh Hashanah is the day of judgement since we need to reconcile what we have done in the past. It is also a day of happiness as we are privileged to open a new page in our lives.

We wear white since we believe that Hashem’s love for us is so true that the forgiveness is guaranteed, but for our part we also need to repent to be deserving of this forgiveness, and there is no question that remembering the Day of all Days helps lessen the burden of repentance.

The sound of the Shofar comes from the heavens but reminds us immediately of our failures down on earth, which causes us sadness.

As the Gr”a explains, we see in the shvarim and tru’a the prophecy of: “...And then will come those lost in the land of Assyria and those cast away in the land of Egypt; and they shall prostrate themselves to Hashem on the holy mountain in Jerusalem.” (Yeshayahu 27:13). The lost are those who have veered off the “right way”, being influenced by foreign thinking, making the people sigh. Those who are cast away are those who have been dealing with incest “... As they did in Egypt” and this brings sadness to our world. The opportunity to purify ourselves is given to us during these days, for us to find our strength and our inner purity and in this way to fix it all.

All these apparent contradictions that are present on Rosh Hashanah instill in us the security that during this year, and our entire life, we will always be able to get over our failures and re-find that starting point for blessings, happiness and salvation. It is through the inherent complexities of the holiday that we find our strength to face another year. Only the Jewish people know how to find this strength, because only we understand that everything – no matter how complicated – can be fixed and forgiven. 🕎

Spotlight on Yeshivat Or Vishua Haifa



Yeshivat Or Vishua in Haifa was established based on the principle that our Torah is a Torah of life, and comes to guide us in every aspect of our national and individual lives. Yeshivat Or Vishua is a Yeshivat Hesder which trains its students to be both Torah scholars as well as contribute to wider society. The yeshiva acts as a center of Jewish life for the wider Haifa community. Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Rahamim Zini is both founder and Rosh Yeshiva of Or Vishua. He previously served as the Rav of the Technion, as well as a lecturer in its Faculty of Mathematics, and in the Department of Humanities and Arts.

The Complete Jew and the Dual Judgement of Rosh Hashanah

Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Director, World Mizrachi

“A Jew is judged on Rosh Hashanah in two separate ways – how s/he has lived as an individual, and how s/he has contributed to the broader community.”

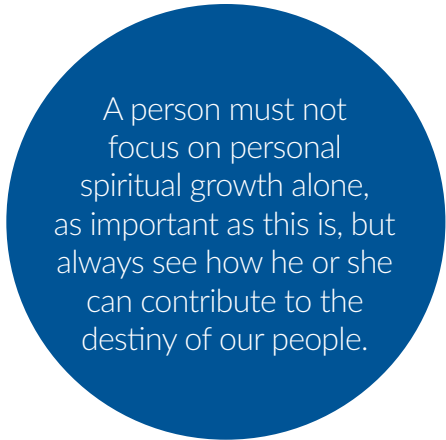
Rosh Hashanah is the only chag that is observed for two days both in Israel and in the Diaspora. Originally it was a one-day festival, as mentioned explicitly in the Chumash. However, since the Second Temple period, our Sages extended it into a two-day chag. Being the only chag celebrated on Rosh Chodesh, many difficulties arose as to the process of sanctifying the new month, which was then reliant on sighting the new moon by witnesses. To overcome these technical difficulties, Rosh Hashanah became a two-day yom tov throughout the Jewish world, being known as a “Yoma Arichta” – one long day.

Over and above the halachic technicalities which led to the two-day transition, I was deeply moved by an explanation based on the Zohar as to why Rosh Hashanah ought to be two separate days.

While studying in Yeshivat Beit El many years ago, we were joined one Elul by a Chassidic Rebbe of the Court of Spinka. He mentioned that the Zohar, the famous Book of Kabbalah, states in Parsha Pinchas that the two days of Rosh Hashanah are based on two verses in the Biblical Book of Iyov (Job). In Job (1:6 and later in 2:1) the pesukim state: “And there was a day when the Sons of G-d came to present themselves before Hashem.” While the literal meaning of the verse is referring to angels, the Zohar says this dual verse is referring to the Day of Judgment, where the Jewish people [who are referred to as the children of G-d in Devarim (14:1)] present themselves before Him.

The Spinka Rebbe went on to explain a beautiful interpretation as to the need for two separate Days of Judgment, which has stuck with me until today. He explained that every Jew lives concurrently on two planes, both as an individual and as a member of our community – the Jewish people.

This dual role has remarkably far-reaching ramifications. It means that a Jew is judged on Rosh Hashanah in two separate ways – how s/he has lived as an



A person must not focus on personal spiritual growth alone, as important as this is, but always see how he or she can contribute to the destiny of our people.

individual, and how s/he has contributed to the Jewish people and broader community. It is for this reason that there are two days of Rosh Hashanah, each with its own distinct spiritual focus and judgment. It means that a person may be judged in one way as an individual, but fare very differently with regard to his/her judgment as part of the Jewish people. It strongly implies that a person's individual destiny is inextricably linked with the destiny of his/her community – Klal Yisrael.

There is no way of escaping it. The principle of “Kol Yisrael Areivim ze ba ze” that all Jews are responsible for each other, is clearly expressed in the dual

judgment of Rosh Hashanah. A person must not focus on personal spiritual growth alone, as important as this is, but always see how he or she can contribute to the destiny of our people. Perhaps this is the reason why the two-day Rosh Hashanah observance began close to the dawn of the exile of the Jewish people from their Holy City and their Land. At this time, the sense of Jewish peoplehood was being eroded as Jews would find themselves scattered to all corners of the globe. Judaism could very easily become individually focused, since we had been stripped of our national homeland and the collective spiritual focus of the Beit Hamikdash. Jews could become a collection of individuals, forgetting about the enormous responsibility we have to each other. This could threaten the very existence of the Jewish people. As we began our exile experience, we needed two days of Rosh Hashanah to remind us not only to focus on ourselves as individuals, but to contribute to building the unshakeable bonds of brotherhood – Klal Yisrael.

May every single one of us aspire to live as complete Jews! After all, we face a dual judgment on Rosh Hashanah both as an individual and a community member and contributor. If we live as complete Jews, both individually and communally, perhaps we will no longer need two separate days which only began close to the dawn of our lengthy exile. We will perhaps be able to return to the original Biblical imperative of a one-day Rosh Hashanah: one day which incorporates both individual and communal togetherness, with the one people serving the One G-d in the One Land. 🕍



Rav Kook: The Teshuva Attitude

נתיבות תשובה פרטיות, פרק יד

כשם שצריכים להעלות את המדות והמחשבות הרעות
לשרשן,
כדי לתקן ולמתקן
כן צריכים להעלות את המדות והמחשבות הקטנות
אע"פ שהן טובות אבל אינן במעלה גדולה ומאירה
למקור שרשן, ולהאירן באור של גדולה
וכשם שמועילים לעולם כולו בעלית המדות והמחשבות
הנפולות,
כך ויותר מועילים ומטיבים לעולם ע"י העלאתן של
המדות והמחשבות הקטנות
בשעולות לאורה גדולה
ומדה זו של העלאת דברים קטנים לגדלות אינה פוסקת
בכל עת ובכל שעה
והיא התשובה הגמורה שצדיקים גמורים באים על ידה
להיות עולים במעלות בעלי תשובה

It is clear [to us] that it is incumbent upon us to elevate all of our negative perspectives and qualities to their root in order to repair and improve them. We must also elevate our qualities and perspectives that are still limited, even though they are good [qualities] but they have not yet reached their full greatness and illumination. We must therefore [elevate them] to reach their original potential, so that they can shine in their full glory.

Just as the entire world benefits when "fallen" qualities are elevated, the elevation of limited perspectives and qualities to a greater light causes even greater good.

This attitude; of elevated limited qualities to greater qualities, is an effort that never ceases,

And it is the Teshuva of complete Tzaddikim who have already reached the level of Baalei Teshuva.

"Elevate all of our negative perspectives and qualities to their root"

There is no creation, perspective, or quality that is intrinsically evil. By virtue of being a part of God's creation, everything must be rooted in good. Our duty is not to abolish evil qualities, but rather to find their root and "elevate" them back to their original goodness. For example, a rebellious nature can be quite negative when it is expressed as a rebellion against a positive social structure, however rebelling against injustice is the greatest act one can do.

"Elevate our qualities and perspectives that are still limited"

We generally see Teshuva as reactionary. If we sin we must repent. Or, teshuva is only necessary if one has made a mistake, but if someone doesn't make mistakes there would be no need for Teshuva. Because of this perception, when we do Teshuva we only focus on our shortcomings. Rav Kook believes that Teshuva is a much broader concept. Teshuva is not only regretting our inadequacies, rather it also includes paying attention to our good qualities. Looking at the positive qualities that Hashem has given us and trying to make them even greater. In this light, teshuva is a constant process of self-improvement, as opposed to a reaction to failure. 🕎



A Rosh Hashanah Message From UK Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

בראש השנה יכתובן וביום צום כיפור – “On Rosh Hashanah it is inscribed and on Yom Kippur it is sealed”

As we recited these moving words in the Unetaneh Tokef prayer last year, we could hardly have anticipated the devastation that would be wrought by the relentless terrorist atrocities that would follow. The daily threat of terror is one to which our brethren in Israel have long become accustomed, but that awful reality has largely been greeted by silence in the mainstream media. Global terrorism has spread its tentacles far and wide, making no place on earth immune to this scourge. As the French philosopher and author Bernard-Henri Lévy has said, the world must now learn from the experiences of the Jewish State.

Never before in the history of human conflict has every innocent man, woman and child found themselves on the front line. As we endure an onslaught on our freedom, our democracy and our very civilization, what should our response be?

The Unetaneh Tokef prayer provides an answer: תשובה, תפילה, וצדקה - Repentance, Prayer, and Charity.

□ תשובה - Repentance

Teshuvah comes from the Hebrew word meaning ‘to return’. Over our High Holy Days we are tasked with making a uniquely honest and comprehensive assessment of ourselves so that we can return to our natural state of piety and purity. Our global challenge is to return to the values of human dignity, tolerance, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. That process must begin

with ourselves and those upon whom we can make a positive impression.

□ תפילה - Prayer

#PrayersForParis. #PrayersForMunich #PrayersForBrussels. If these popular sentiments from social media are anything to go by, it seems that the world is rarely more united in prayer than after

I believe that we are far more likely to change the world through positive action and leading by example, than simply by standing in judgement.

devastating terrorist attacks. In July, after a particularly brutal murder of a beloved Catholic Priest in Normandy, one Twitter user responded to my own message in despair: “The time for prayer is long gone,” he said. I couldn’t disagree more.

The Talmud describes prayer as avodah shebalev – the ‘service of the heart’ – because, in essence, prayer is about training oneself to love and serve God. The Hebrew word for prayer, tefillah, is linked to tofel, which means connecting to a greater power. We pray with a deep sense of humility and responsibility because we understand that we can never simply be a ‘law unto ourselves’. The power of prayer has always been and will always be a force for good; a spiritual connection with something greater than ourselves, elevating our souls and directly affecting

our future actions. We will never fully comprehend the potency of our prayers or how things would have turned out without them but we do know that while terror thrives on a sense of narcissism and superiority, through prayer, we act with modesty and accountability.

□ צדקה - Charity/Righteousness

The first Chief Rabbi of the Holy Land, Rav Kook, taught that the antidote to causeless hatred is causeless love. Having embraced Teshuvah and Tefillah with all of the self-improvement that they require, we will have an instinctive and deeply rooted love for peace. But Tzedakah is the means by which we look beyond ourselves and turn that goodness into positive, meaningful action that will leave a lasting impact on the world around us.

Every one of us can increase the degree to which we give of ourselves to others, whether as part of an organised charitable campaign or by investing our time and energy into kindness and generosity. There is no degree of evil that cannot be overcome and outshone by an equal and opposite desire to do good for others.

Embracing more fully these three fundamental principles of Jewish life as a response to global hatred and violence might feel inadequate, even naïve. But, I believe that we are far more likely to change the world through positive action and leading by example, than simply by standing in judgement.

May this coming year be one filled with only peace and reconciliation among the peoples of the world. Valerie and I extend to you all our very best wishes for a happy and fulfilling New Year. 🌟



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