

ראש השנה — יום חלוקת התפקידים

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Rosh Hashanah: The Day the Ta'kidim Are Given Out

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ROSH HASHANAH begins with a question.

Rosh Hashanah is the Yom Hadin, and the din is on the year that has just ended — on what a person did, on what came of him. If that is what the day is, it should have been named for the accounting it settles. Instead, the masechta that deals with its halachos is called Rosh Hashanah: the head of the year that has not yet begun. Not Yom Hazikaron, not Yom Teruah. What is the pshat in that?

The answer lies in the pashtus itself. The din is not really about last year at all. The Yom Hadin is for Rosh Hashanah — for the year that is about to open. To see why, a person first needs a clear picture of what the world turns on.

The Ramban writes (בראשית ב, ג) that the sheishes yemei bereishis correspond to the six thousand years of the world, each day against a thousand years; the Gaon adds that the seven words of בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ correspond to the seven thousand. Why should a single day contain a millennium? Because when the Ribbono shel Olam creates something, its entire future already lies inside it from the moment it is created. Had Adam Harishon not sinned, it would have come out straight immediately; once he sinned, it stretched into six thousand years, a thousand to each of the days of maaseh bereishis.

The Maharal in Gevuros Hashem says that שנה is from the loшон of שינוי. We do not live that way. We live as though there is one year, and a second, and a third: the same summer, the same winter, the same inyanim, with no real connection between them. The Maharal says clearly that it is not so. A shanah is a change. No year has any relationship to the year beside it — because inside that one year lies the ta'kid of the beriah.

Why should the beriah work this way? The Ribbono shel Olam created the olam haruchni, and out of the olam haruchni He created the olam hagashmi. In the olam haruchni there is no zman at all; zman exists only in this world. Where there is no zman, everything is one. Take a seed: in it lies the whole tree, and only when it comes down into the beriah does it grow and separate out into pratim. The entire adam is already in the zera, down to the most minute detail, because up there it is still one thing.

So the six thousand years are one posuk, and in the single word בראשית lies all of it. Through the years He draws it out and makes chalukim of the zman: there is an avodah that has to be done, and it is divided up among the thousands of years. It comes out that there is a ta'kid. Every dor has one, and even within a single dor, each individual year has its own. So the Ribbono shel Olam has to make a plan for the year — and who carries out His plan? A Yid. The tachlis of Klal Yisroel is to be megaleh kavod Shomayim; kabbalas ol malchus Shomayim is the gilui of the Ribbono shel Olam in the world, and it is Klal Yisroel that reveals Him. Every Yid has a ta'kid, and it is matched to the ta'kid of the year.

Now the din reads differently. Before the new year the Ribbono shel Olam has to hand out the tachlis to each Yid, so He makes a Yom Hadin. What did this Yid do for malchus Shomayim last year? Sefer HaChaim means that he accomplishes — that he is capable of accomplishing. Sefer HaMeisim means that nothing comes of him. If something was given last year and it did not come out, mimeila it goes the other way. The din on the first day of the year is the giving out of the jobs.

And here is the raya. There is not a word of teshuvah in the Shemoneh Esrei of Rosh Hashanah. ובכן תן פחדך ה' ובכן תן כבוד אלקינו. It is all kavod Shomayim and malchus Shomayim — we are asking that the Ribbono shel Olam bring malchus Shomayim down here. What does that have to do with a yom hateshuvah? One would have thought the din is on him, and therefore he has to do teshuvah. But the din is on the world, and on what a person can do for it.

The poshute pshat in the tefillos of Rosh Hashanah is that we are asking for gilui kavod Shomayim, and that we are placing ourselves before the Ribbono shel Olam as avadim. The Sifsei Chaim puts it this way: when a man comes to daven on Rosh Hashanah, he comes to say Hineni — I am here to do for the Ribbono shel Olam, to be marbeh kavod Shomayim in the world. That is the tachlis, and that is the tefillah. Is it also a yom teshuvah? Avadah it is — he has to wipe out the chato'im so that we can be mechabed Shomayim b'ofen hachi tov. But that is not the yesod.

It is a chiddush, but it is the poshute pshat — because the Shemoneh Esrei of Rosh Hashanah speaks of nothing but

kavod Shomayim. That is Malchiyos: bringing the Melech into the world.

What the Avodah Actually Is

But the shaila is still standing. If kabbalas ol malchus Shomayim means becoming an eved to the Ribbono shel Olam, what is the avodah that an eved is supposed to do? That is the ikkur of Rosh Hashanah: to tell Him that I want to be His eved, that I want to do the avodah.

The Ramban in Parshas Va'eschanan (דברים ו, יג) brings two peirushim in **ואותו תעבוד**. The first:

לעשות כל אשר צוך כעבד שומע מצות אדוניו. ויתכן שיהיה זה רמז לעבודת הקרבנות.

Avodah, in its plain sense, is avodas hakorbanos — the mitzvah of keeping His commands is already stated in the posuk, and this is something further. And the Ramban brings the Sifri on **ואותו תשמעו ואותו תעבודו** in Re'eh:

ואותו תעבודו — עבדה בתורתו, עבדה במקדשו.

The Ramban is telling us that avodah b'Torasos is domeh to avodah b'korbanos. What is avodas Hashem? A person gives away the korban in place of himself — he is makriv himself to the Ribbono shel Olam. And on Rosh Hashanah, he makes himself into a korban.

And avodas b'Torasos is the same thing. Look at the word the Ramban adds — it is not there in the Sifri, and he is mosif it: **ללמוד התורה ולהגות בה**. Torah is an ofen of korban: learning Torah, hogeh in it yomam valayla, goes into that same avodas hamikdash — because there too a man gives himself away.

It comes out that bizman hazeh, when there is no avodah b'korbanos, tefillah stands in its place — and avodah b'Torasos, according to the Sifri, goes into the etzem yesod of Rosh Hashanah.

But the Ramban also brings the Tanchuma, which takes it somewhere else. HaKadosh Boruch Hu tells Klal Yisroel that they may not swear by His Name, even b'emes, unless all of these middos are found in them: that a person be of those called yirei Elokim, like Avraham, like Yosef, like Iyov — and then:

ואותו תעבוד — שתהא מפנה עצמך לתורה ולמצות, ולא יהא לך עבודה אחרת.

That kind of avodah means that there should be nothing else in a person's life besides avodas Hashem. Nothing else. Not a thing. And here the Ramban adds a little of his own on top of the Tanchuma:

ואותו תעבוד — לדעתם, שתהא לו בכל עת כעבד הקנוי המשרת לפני אדוניו תמיד, שעושה מלאכת רבו עיקר וצרכי עצמו עראי, עד שיבוא מזה מה שאמרו וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים, שאפילו צרכי הגוף לשם עבודת הא-ל יהיו, יאכל וישן ויעשה צרכיו כדי קיום הגוף.

Everything that a person does has to be avodas Hashem. Everything. That is the avodah tomid — kiyum haguf, eating, drinking, sleeping.

A man has to sleep; otherwise he cannot sit and learn. He sleeps a little precisely so that he can get up and be osek baTorah — and that is why the Medrash can call sleep **טוב ויתכון בכל צרכי הגוף למקרא שכתוב מאד**. The Ramban closes: **ואהללה ה' בחיי אומרה לאלקי בעודי. וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים**. That is the inyan of Rosh Hashanah: that a man gives himself away entirely.

And the Ramban here is in agreement with the Rambam at the end of the fifth perek of Shemoneh Perakim. Words so short that hold so much inside them, says the Rambam, were certainly said b'nevuah, b'ruach hakodesh — and he is speaking of **כל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים**. That the Chachamim could say it in those few words, and that in them lies the whole of Yiddishkeit, is ruach hakodesh.

This is what we are telling the Ribbono shel Olam: that we hand ourselves over, entirely, to be megaleh kavod Shomayim. That is kabbalas ol malchus Shomayim, and that is b'emes the inyan of Rosh Hashanah. Malchiyos.

The first thing to take out of this is that every Yid has a tafkid, and that his tafkid consists of giving every one of his kochos over to it. If he is eating, he is eating l'shem Shomayim for kiyum gufo; if he is sleeping, kedee kiyum gufo. Avodah a man has to do teshuvah, because without it the chato'im stand in the way. But the yesod is to become an eved Hashem. That is what a Yid comes into the beis medrash with on Rosh Hashanah.

As a yingel I was in Philadelphia, and Reb Elya Svei zt"l said shmuessen from time to time. There was hardly a shmuess that was not kavod Shomayim, kavod Shomayim, kavod Shomayim. That is truly the tachlis of a Yid. Kabbalas ol malchus Shomayim is the kavod Shomayim that comes out of every single Yid — and every Yid can do it.

I work with bochurim, young and older. Look at what a bochur is today. A bochur in mesivta — he is learning, he is davening, he can do a tova for somebody else. You go over to him and ask: this bochur is not learning, could you learn with him? Yes. A Yiddishe bochur is a different metzius altogether, and it makes no difference whether a person is young or old.

What a kiddush Hashem it is. A kollel opened in Lakewood for retired men. On the first day, one of them came over to the one who had set it up and told him: this is Olam Haba. And then I pass — there is a park on County Line Road over here, and there is a golf course. So for my own mussar I go and look at the golf course, and I see the old men there. They cannot do anything else. They have waited their whole lives for this, that they should be able to play golf. A whole life, to play golf.

That is kavod Shomayim — in the young and in the old, in anashim and in nashim, in all of them. And this is what a person has to put into himself. If he does it the way it has to be done, and he is truly mekabel ol malchus Shomayim and mechabed Shomayim b'rabbim — that will bring Moshiach tzidkeinu bimheirah b'yameinu. The whole kehillah, the whole world, stands on such yungeleit. The Ribbono shel Olam should take these zechusim and bring Moshiach bimheirah b'yameinu