

## עניני אלול - שופר וסליחות

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As we approach the *Yamim Noraim*, I wish to share with you a few related ideas.

The *mitzvah* of *Shofar* is described by the Rambam as follows. The purpose *Tekias Shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah* is עורר יְשָׁנִים מְשַׁנְתְּכֶם וְנִרְדְּמִים הִקִּיצוּ מִתְרַדְּמֵיכֶם. *Shofar* is a wake-up call for us. The reason for this is because of the *pasuk*, (ישעיה נה, ו) "דרשו ה' בהמצאו קראהו בהיותו קרוב" (ישעיה נה, ו) which obligates us to respond to the *Ribono Shel Olam* when He initiates His availability to us. *Rosh Hashanah, Yom haDin*, is the day in which He makes himself available for the world. Therefore, we must have the proper reaction which the *Shofar* affects in us.

On the other hand, the *Shofar* of *Elul* is only a *minhag*. Even though we blow *Shofar* every day during *Chodesh Elul* for the same purpose of עורר יְשָׁנִים מְשַׁנְתְּכֶם וְנִרְדְּמִים הִקִּיצוּ מִתְרַדְּמֵיכֶם, it is still just a *minhag*. Why? Because the whole *metzius* of *Elul* is "Ani LeDodi VeDodi Li." First comes the "Ani LeDodi," that each of us must initiate the growth of our relationship to *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*, to which He promises a response. *Minhagei Yisroel* represent the initiative of *Klal Yisroel*. *Sephardim* have the *minhag* to say *Selichos* every day of *Elul* and *Aseres Yemei Teshuva*. While *Ashkenazim* don't have that *minhag*, they do have the *minhag* of blowing *Shofar* throughout *Chodesh Elul*. That *Shofar* comes from the *Shofar* which *Klal Yisroel* blew on the first day of *Elul* when *Moshe Rabbeinu* went back up *Har Sinai* to get the *Luchos Sheniyos*. *Klal Yisroel* blew *Shofar* to mark the day he went up in order to prevent the fatal mistake from the *Luchos haRishonos* to repeat itself.

The *inyan* of blowing *Shofar* in connection to *Luchos Sheniyos* has a tremendous *limud* for us. *Luchos haRishonos* were a *matanah* from the *Ribono Shel Olam*. Had we received them, not only would we know every single aspect and detail of *Kol haTorah Kulah* but there would also never have been any *shichechah* of it. *Ameilus* wouldn't be necessary to be *koneh* it and *chazarah* wouldn't be needed to retain it. The *Luchos Sheniyos*, on the other hand, requires (דברים י, א) "פסל לך על שני לוחות אבנים כראשנים". It requires *Klal Yisroel* having to prepare them, which really describes our relationship with *HaKadosh Boruch Hu* from then on. That is, that we must make our hearts into *luchos* that can accept and be *koneh* the Torah just like *Moshe Rabbeinu* had to prepare the *Luchos Sheniyos*. We have to do this with *ameilus*, by putting in tremendous effort.

Those of us who prepare to give *shiurim*, or even those who learn *b'iyun*, know that when you come across something difficult to understand you think about it once, twice, and you read the *gemara* over again and the *Rashi* over again and the *Tosafos* over again, and things are not clear. Then, all of the sudden the nickel drops and things become clear. What's the *pshat*? If we do the פסל לך of the *ameilus baTorah* then the *Ribono Shel Olam* writes the Torah on our hearts as a *matanah min Shomayim*.

Our whole relationship with *HaKadosh Boruch Hu* that is characterized in the *Luchos Sheniyos* is really this idea that we have to initiate. This is what *Elul* is all about. *Elul* is *Klal Yisroel's* initiative. We know that *Yom haDin* is coming and we have *minhagim* to wake ourselves up in order to initiate our relationship with *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*. He promises us a *gevaldigge* "Dodi Li" if we begin the "Ani LeDodi," as *Chazal* say פתחו לי פתחו של מחט אני אפתך לכם פתחו של אולם. All we need to do is open up the connection a tiny bit- a pinhole, and Hashem will expand it greatly.

*Rosh Hashanah* is already a response to *HaKadosh Boruch Hu's* initiative, which is why it says that one who doesn't do *teshuva* on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* is "yichbad avono v'yachpil onsho." The punishment becomes greater because at that point the person is ignoring Hashem's initiation

of opening His hands to accept our *teshuva* which obligates a response, and not taking advantage of Hashem coming to us is even worse.

*Bichlal*, what is the *kavanah* that we are supposed to have in *Tekias Shofar*? The *Gemara* discusses the middle sounds, why we blow the *Shevarim* and *Teruah*. Is it a sigh that the *Shevarim* is supposed to represent (*genuchay gonach*) or is it a wailing sound that the *Teruah* represents (*yelulay yolil*), or is it both together? On *Rosh Hashanah*, we blow all of them. The idea is that they represent the *midas haDin* of *Rosh Hashanah*, the fear that they should enact in us. The *tekiah* before it heralds the presence of the King. The *tekiah achareha* is *hamtokas haDin*, to demonstrate our understanding that if we accept the King then the *Ribono Shel Olam*'s response to us is *hamtokas haDin*.

Therefore, the *makrei* on *Rosh Hashanah* should really say the two *tekios* slightly different. Our *Rosh Yeshiva*, HaRav Aharon Feldman *Shlita*, is *makpid* about this. In order to be *mechaven* properly you have to know whether you are listening to the *tekiah shelifanehah* or *shelacharahah*. He says the first "*tekiAh*" by going up at the last syllable but the second "*tekIah*" by dropping at the last syllable.

Another *nekudah* I would like to share is the following observation. The Torah gives us the *Yom haDin* first and *Aseres Yemei Teshuva* afterwards, culminating with the *Yom Selicha V'Chaparah* of *Yom HaKippurim*. *Lich'orah*, why don't we have the *tekufah* of *teshuva* and *kapparah* first and then face the *Din* of *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*? The answer is that our *tefillos* on *Rosh Hashanah* are mainly dealing with the *Malchus* of *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*.

What is this *Malchus*? A real *melech* is in absolute total control of all of his subjects. The scrutiny of the *Yom haDin* where each of us is judged not only for what we did and did not do, and what our *machshavos* are, but even all the *doros* preceding us and coming after us are judged. Why? Because the very essence of *Malchus* is that control of the *melech* over his subjects. The *Ribono Shel Olam* gives us *Rosh Hashanah* first in order that we can fully accept the *Malchus* before beseeching him to deal with us specially and be *mekabel* our *teshuva*, whatever level it is on. Clearly, *HaKadosh Boruch Hu* reacts to even a non-*teshuva gemura* as the *Gemara* in *Yoma* relates, if you do *teshuva* then *זדונות נעשה לו כזכויות*, your *aveiros* turn into mitzvos, and another line says *זדונות נעשה לו כשגגות*, that they are changed from deliberate *aveiros* to the level of accidental ones. The *Gemara* explains that the difference is *teshuva mei'Ahava* and *teshuva mei'Yirah*. This means that even a less than perfect *teshuva* is accepted and processed by *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*.

This is also why we have an interesting situation in the *ייג מדות הרחמים*, which we recite every time we say *Selichos*. At the end of the list is *נשא עון ופשע וחטאה*. *Avon* are sins done *b'mezid*, *pesha* are done in rebellion against *Hashem*, and *chata'ah* are normally *b'shogeg*. One might ask that these are seemingly out of order to say that *HaKadosh Boruch Hu* carries *b'mezid*, not only that but also *pesha*, and on top of that he even carries *shogeg*. The answer is that the *midah* of going in this order highlights the idea that if someone does *teshuva mei'Yeirah* then his *aveiros* are turned into *shegagos*. It's an extra *midas harachamim* that even an imperfect *teshuva* is still *mekubal* by *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*. Therefore, the order must be this way.

We first must accept *HaKadosh Boruch Hu*'s *Malchus*, which is why we have very few references to *teshuva* and *mechila* in the *avodah* of *Rosh Hashanah*, as opposed to *Yom Kippur* where it is the *ikkur nekudah* of our *tefillos*. *אמר לפני מלכויות כדי שתמליכוני עליכם*, we say *Malchiyos* in order to be *mamlich HaKadosh Boruch Hu* as our *Melech*; we say *Zichronos* before *HaKadosh Boruch Hu* *זיכרונותינו שתעלה זיכרונותינו לפני לטובה*, in order that we understand that the judgement is not only on us as individuals but on all of *Klal Yisroel* as a whole, and on the history and the future of *Klal Yisroel*. And with what, *במה בשופר*. The *Shofar* projects before *HaKadosh Boruch Hu* first our *kabbalah* of His *malchus*, the acceptance of His scrutiny over us, and the *hamtokas haDin* that *Hashem* forgives us according to each of our own levels.

This is why *Yom haDin* precedes *Yom haKippurim*. Once we have fully accepted the sovereignty of *HaKadosh Boruch Hu* only then are we in a position to beseech Him for *mechila*, *selicha*, *v'kapara*. May we be *zoche* with this to a *Kesiva Vachasima Tova* and *Ah Gut G'bencht Yohr*.