

Chasidic Insights into the Yamim Nora'im [2]

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In Bamidbar (29:2) Rosh Hashana is YOM TRU'A, day of sounding the shofar, while Vayikra (23:24) calls it ZICHRON TRU'A, remembrance of the sounding. Bamidbar refers to Rosh Hashana of weekdays on which there is shofar blowing and Vayikra to Rosh Hashana when it occurs on Shabbat and we only have a memory of the T'KI'OT. Talmud Bavli rules that, even though Shofar blowing is not considered work on Shabbat, there is no shofar because of the fear that the one who blows will carry it from reshut to reshut if he has questions. However, in Talmud Yerushalmi the reasoning reflects the nature both of Shabbat and Shofar.

Shevarim are like the sounds a sick man makes in his pain and suffering as he falls broken and helpless. This corresponds to our feelings when we recount our sins and shortcomings, and realize our spiritual illness. So we blow the shofar to awaken these feelings and call us to t'shuva on Rosh Hashana. However, on Shabbat there is no place for sorrow, soul searching or despair, only for oneg, peace of mind and knowledge of Hashem. So on Shabbat there is no need for blowing the shofar, only to mention a remembrance. Nevertheless, in the Beit HaMikdash they blew even on Shabbat and Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai ruled that after the churban they continue this in every place there is a beit din. This was

because the Mikdash could unite fear and din with love and peace; the beit din can do the same in its rulings.

"Rabbi Eliezer [of Bet Shamai] holds that the world was created in Tishrei while Rabbi Yehoshua [of Bet Hillel] holds that creation was in Nissan" (Rosh Hashana 10b); the Zodiac sign for Tishrei is the scales of justice while that of Nissan is a lamb, symbol of chesed. The thought of creation was in midat hadin while its realization was through midat hachessed (Tosafot). Thoughts are an expression of the innermost person and therefore justify midat hadin whereas actions express the externalities which call for rachamim. This helps us understand the Zohar's teaching that the two days of Rosh Hashana are divided between the severe din of the first day and more lenient judgment of the second day. On the first day we are judged on spiritual and internal things to see whether we are worthy of Hashem, in which respect this is so and to what extent it is achieved. The judgment on the 2nd day is on our worldly affairs and on those external to our spirituality and religiosity, all of which are judged with chesed. Thus the first day's judgment is more severe than that of the second day.

Since all material wealth and prosperity is already judged on these chagim, Rosh Hashana is judgment on our lives, dinei nefashot as material prosperity is judged on Pesach [grains], Shavuot [fruits], and Sukkot [rain]. This theme, both for the individual and for the nations, is repeated throughout the tefilot of Rosh Hashana. However, we

should not pray on this day simply for longevity and success in our worldly affairs; this is described by Chazal as the barking of dogs for their food and sustenance. With this in mind, the ARI HaKadosh would not say, *zochreinu l'chayim*. Rather, we should pray that our days should be prolonged so that we have time and leisure for *avodat Hashem* and that we should see our children grow in Torah, *mitzvot* and *ma'asim tovim*, both of which are the real purpose for our living. This is why the tefilot end "*lemancha Elokim chayim*".

[Rav Kook explained that Eretz Yisrael flows with milk and honey, milk which originates in meat and honey which come from a non-kosher insect. Eretz Yisrael has the holiness to transform both into kosher food and the secular and material into holiness]. Honey has the quality of transforming anything covered by it into honey. So we eat an apple dipped in honey and bread dipped in honey, which is symbolic of our desire to turn darkness into light and bitterness into sweetness. Rosh Hashana is the appropriate time for this as it is *reishit hashana* and everything *reishit* has the power to change and transform that which follows. This power negates darkness and evil, but also transforms darkness into light and evil into goodness. This is the separate function of each of the 2 days of Rosh Hashana. The severe *din* of the 1st day transforms everything into holiness and destroys all evil, so *resha'im g'murim*, those who are utterly evil, are immediately destined to death. The lenient judgment of the 2nd day merely subverts everything to holiness and so

even those people who were not worthy of being cleansed on the 1st day, have the opportunity to subject themselves to Hashem.

Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur bracket together *aseret y'mei t'shuva* but there seem to be only 8, as there are no *slichot* and no *vidui* on Rosh Hashana. However, the 2 days of Rosh Hashana are the coronation of Hashem and it is His Kingship which makes *t'shuva* possible so they are an integral part of the 10 days of *t'shuva*. ★