



## Rosh Hashana Incredible Illumination

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles  
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

From the beginning of *Elul* until *Hoshanah Rabba* we say "*Ledovid Hashem ohri v'yishi...*" By David, Hashem is my light and my salvation." The *Midrash* teaches that my light refers to Rosh Hashanah. What is the connection between the shofar and light, and between light and salvation, asks Rabbi Roth in *Sichot Eliyahu*.

Shevivei Ohr quotes the verse in *Tehilim*, "The heavens will be glad and the earth will rejoice... before Hashem,... for He will have arrived to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth." So, while Hashem's coming evokes fear and trepidation, it also inspires joy, for Hashem is coming to each of us individually, whoever opens his heart to Him.

While Hashem is always here, we live in a world of darkness and trepidation. It is only with a flash of light that we begin to see ourselves and our world clearly. We understand what Hashem wants of us and recognize that these obligations are indicative of the greatness within each of us. We see the world as Hashem's domain, and we feel Hashem shining His light upon us. We need to use this light effectively. The primal, hidden light of creation, the light that enabled Adam to see "from one end of the world to the other end," is the glimmer of light we have on *Rosh Hashanah*, when Hashem "comes down" into our world as He came down to Adam and Chavah. The *Shvivei Pinchas* says they heard

the sound of the *shofar*, asking them—and asking us every year - "Where are you?"

This primal light does not appear automatically, writes *Moda Labinah*. The *shofar* awakens us to it. When we hear the *shofar*, we have to imagine we are in the darkness awaiting the illumination of Hashem's arrival. *Rosh Hashanah* shines that light on our world and helps us see reality. Let us use this light to examine our values, to see whether we are spending our time and our money on things of true value.

The first 2,000 years after creation were years of desolation. The primal light was hidden, waiting to be revealed again when Hashem would give us the *Torah*. Fittingly, all the verses in the *Shofrot* section of *Mussaf* refer to receiving the *Torah*. The sound of the shofar is the wordless communication that wakes us up to see the light we saw at *Sinai*. While we live in a physical world, we must establish a balance that creates a meaningful life of connection.

Rosh Hashanah is a time we are reborn to start life as a new person. It is a day of judging and accounting. All that is concealed comes before Hashem on this day to be fully weighed as good or bad, in the absolutes that only Hashem sees. While we are surrounded by so many good *middot*, we nevertheless tend to remain focused on ourselves, on what other people think of me, observes the *Machshevet*

*Mussar*. How often do we ask ourselves what Hashem will think of our action? The light shines on us to judge ourselves and for us to light the path others must walk. If you help light the path of others, Hashem will shed light on you.

As we articulate our deepest feeling through our mouths, so does the sound of the shofar begin in the mouth and emanate upward, writes the *Avodat Avodah*. The sound of the *shofar* awakens the truth deep within us that Hashem breathed into us. As the verse states, "*Elokim* has ascended with a blast, Hashem [YKVK] with the sound of the *shofar*". It is this light that illuminates and maintains the world. With the sound of the *shofar*, the blankets of nature, represented by the Name *Elokim* that obscure God's presence, are pierced, and the primal light of Hashem is revealed.

*Shevivei Ohr* explains that light has a fundamental characteristic different from other entities. If I fill a bottle with water, then cap it and separate it from its source, the bottle still contains the water. Not so with light. If light flows into a room and I create a barrier by covering the windows the room becomes dark. It only remains lit when it is still connected to its source. So too are we only fully alive and animated when we remain connected to Hashem's light within us.

May Hashem shine His light upon us and bless us throughout the coming year.

## Rosh Hashana 5783

### Why I Can't Change Consequences

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

Everything we do, whether positive or negative has consequences. There are consequences that can't be changed, but where we can correct, we are obligated to do so. If a person stole money he's required to give it back. But there are situations which are impossible to correct such as if someone killed someone. In *Parshat Ki Setze* the *Torah* discusses the obligation to put a railing around a roof and it says, "Because the one who falls will fall from the roof." Rashi explains, this person was a *nofel* before he

came to your roof. There was already a decree upon him, but it was still your responsibility to make sure you weren't the cause of his death. If you were, there's something you need to correct.

The Gemara says, wisdom, the *Torah*, and prophecy were asked "How is a sinner punished?" He damaged his spiritual essence and he isn't the same person as he was before. Wisdom said bad things should happen to him, prophecy said he should die,

and *Torah* said he should bring an offering. Then Hashem said, let him do *teshuva* and this will be an atonement. The *Torah* is full of exhortations to do *teshuva*, why did only Hashem answer this way?

When a person commits a sin even unintentionally it affects his soul and creates a lack of clarity and a blockage between him and Hashem. It changes reality. He isn't the same anymore. If he does complete *teshuva*, the act will be erased in terms of reward and punish-

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punishment, but the effect still remains and only Hashem can revert him back to what he was.

It takes a lot of courage and a lot of ups and downs to change one small *middah*, let alone a whole years worth of misdeeds. How can we accomplish this? Chazal tell us that if a wicked person marries a woman on the condition that he is a *tzadik* the marriage is valid. There's the famous story of Rabbi Elazar ben Dordeah about whom Rabbi Akiva cried, "There are those who can earn *olam habah* in an hour." How can we understand this?

The Shem MiShmuel explains that the reason a *rotzeach b'shogeg* needs to run to

an *ir miklat* is so that he will begin living in a new environment with the *Leviim* who will be his role models and there he will be able to start afresh. In a different reality it is possible to recreate yourself. A person who goes through suffering is forced to stop short and takes stock of himself. He then repents, detaching himself from his past and starting anew. Marriage is a new beginning, an opportunity to go from one reality to another. For years, Rabbi Elazar was caught in a certain behavior and didn't stop to examine the bigger picture. When he got a wakeup call it took him to a new beginning where he was able to repent.

So too, Elul and the High Holidays are a new start for us. It arouses us to stop, take stock,

and ask ourselves- What are my priorities, where am I heading? At any level, this can bring us to see reality differently, to create a new way that erases the old. Coming to Rosh Hashana with a resolution is great but it doesn't forge a new start. We have to create something different than what was before. On *Rosh Hashana*, we don't mention sins, we don't focus on the details. We create a fresh state of mind by praying for a new beginning and new aspirations, for a general improved relationship with Hashem.

In regard to actions were limited, but in terms of mindset -what I want and what is important to me, that is limitless. And the more I invest, the more I will be able to affect myself and others for the better.

## Tehilim 81: Rejoicing on the Somber Day of Judgement Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

"I removed his shoulder from burdens; his hands were removed from the cauldron." The term *dud* refers to a gigantic cauldron in which mortar was prepared. Rav Hirsh explains that when the Jews left *Mitzrayim* they were liberated from the notion that they didn't have moral freedom and were under the control of fate. Hashem took that burden off us and recognized us as a free people.

Hashem said, "The language of I don't know, I heard." When Moshe came to Pharaoh and asked him to free the people, Pharaoh responded, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to Him..." When Hashem heard that He was determined to let him know and He removed the burden from the people and brought the plagues which led to *Yetziat Mitzrayim*.

I am Hashem who brought you up from Egypt, open your mouth wide and I will fill it." This refers to the *mohn*, the slav... Hashem says, just ask for your needs and I'll give it to you and if they aren't met its because Hashem

wants you to cry out for it. That was the test of *Mei Meriva*.

When the Jews came out of *Mitzrayim* their first major stop was *Mara* where the spring of water was bitter. Moshe cast a tree into the water and it turned sweet. It also says that there Hashem gave them *chok* and *mishpat*. We were given the *mitzva* of *Shabbat* and the laws between man and man. At *Mei Meriva* the Jews needed water and Hashem told Moshe to speak to the rock but instead he hit it. It was then that he was barred from entering Israel. Hashem wanted a new kind of leadership, no longer of compulsion but of persuasion. If a rock can listen, then a human being certainly can.

Hashem says, "Hearken, My people, and I shall admonish you, Israel, if you hearken to Me. No strange god shall be within you, neither shall you prostrate yourself to a foreign god. Some say these two prohibitions are one but Rav Hirsh tells us *el zar* is the *yetzer hara* and that's why it says -inside you. Don't allow the evil inclination inside you to become your

idol. Do not sell yourself to your desires. At the same time, don't subjugate yourself to idols. In modern language we would say this refers to whatever civilization surrounds us worships such as celebrities, money...

"But my people didn't listen to My voice... So I let them go after their heart's fantasies..." *Sherirut* is related to *ashurenu* which means seeing. Rashi explains, Hashem says- Let's see how you will run the world without me. Ibn Ezra argues that it comes from the word *sharir* -strength or according to the stubbornness of their hearts. It implies- Let them follow their own stubborn ways and we'll see what will happen. Rav Hirsh differentiates between the word strength or how you can see it and translates it as following the physical drives within you.

"If Israel would go in My ways in a short time I would subdue their enemies... He would Feed them with the fat of wheat and satiate them with honey from a rock..." Honey refers to the sweetness and truth of *Torah*.