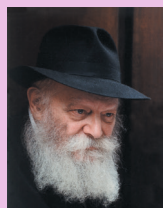


L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, *Nitzavim*, is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana. There are so many things about this portion that connect to Rosh Hashana. *Nitzavim* speaks of our commitment to G-d, His Torah and *mitzvot* (commandments). It teaches about "*teshuva*" and tells of how G-d will gather us from the farthest places. It is clearly talking about us and our time, as we sit on the threshold of Moshiach's coming.

Teshuva means "return [to G-d]." On a basic level this means, to regret your past lapses, ask for forgiveness and get back on G-d's path.

For a person who has broken trust and wants to once again be trusted, being remorseful and saying "I'm sorry" is not enough. He needs to reach higher, find a greater level of character and prove himself worthy.

However *teshuva* can be so much more. Even the holiest of people can tap into the power of *teshuva*.

The verse in our Torah portion states, "And you will return until the L-rd your G-d." What does "until" mean? "Return" implies going back to a place or situation you were in before. We are returning to a place where we are in perfect harmony with G-d, the place before our lapse or indiscretion.

Each of us have a soul, described in Chabad Chasidic teachings as an actual "part" of G-d. It is our essence. Over time we could become so involved in the world around us that our soul gets forgotten.

Teshuva is connecting to our G-dly essence, the soul. It is a journey to your core, every step you take inward, brings clarity. You see how you are one with G-d, and that He loves you because you are part of Him. When you connect at this level, the lower levels of *teshuva* are automatic. How could you remain the same after connecting so deeply? Regret, remorse and contrition over your previous state will overtake you, and you become closer to G-d.

Being that our soul is infinite – part of Infinite G-d – there are always deeper levels to connect to. Through *teshuva* even a totally righteous person will access new levels of bonding with G-d.

Your core essence is already there; your soul has always been at the highest level. You now have to "return until G-d," return to where your soul is one with G-d.

Suffering also brings one closer to G-d. We have suffered enough. Perhaps G-d wants our closeness to come from our own initiative.

In preparation for Rosh Hashana, let us take the initiative to get closer to G-d. May He, with His Parental love, send Moshiach and gather the exiles and bring us home.

Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.

Simple Sounds

by Rabbi Michoel Gourarie

On Rosh Hashana, we will hear the sounds of the Shofar once again. Our Sages teach us that Shofar blowing is what Rosh Hashana is all about. What is so special about these seemingly simple sounds?

The Shofar is blown throughout the service in various different ways. But it always follows the same pattern: We always begin by blowing a "*Tekia*" – a long straight sound. This is followed by a "*Terua*" (or *Shevarim*) – short, broken up, crying like sounds. These sounds are followed by yet another long "*Tekia*."

This is the formula:
Tekia – Terua – Tekia.

A great Chassidic Rabbi explained that this pattern tells the story of our life journey and expresses the power of Rosh Hashanah.

The long, smooth *Tekiah* is a symbol of purity, innocence and perfection. On the other hand the broken *Teruah* sounds are the challenges of life. They represent darkness, confusion, complication and frustration.

Our life begins with a *Tekia*. We are born with a natural purity, with an untainted soul that is perfect and unchallenged. The innocence of a new born baby reflects the purity and holiness of the soul.

But inevitably, sooner or later, the long and beautiful *Tekia* is replaced

by the broken sounds of the *Terua*. We begin to experience confusion, face difficulties, and are suddenly thrown into the ups and downs of a complicated and sometimes challenging existence.

But this is the power of Rosh Hashana. When we begin a fresh new year, the past is not always so positive. Not everything in the last year might have been a *Tekia*. But on this special day we can turn it all around. We can learn from last

year's experiences and make the future more positive. We can turn challenge into opportunity; transform the bad into good and darkness into light, using difficulty and confusion as growth tools to emerge as stronger and deeper human beings.

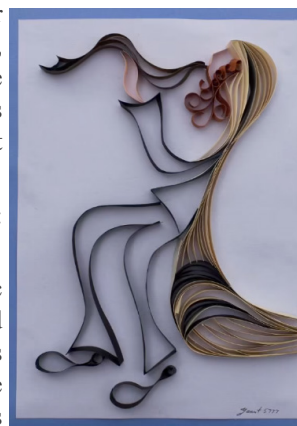
And so we conclude with a *Tekia* again.

Out of the *Terua* emerges a greater, stronger and deeper *Tekia* than the one we began with. Light that comes from darkness is brighter than natural light. Smoothness and purity that emerges from challenge is deeper and stronger than the natural innocence that we experience at birth.

Hence the Shofar pattern: *Tekia* – *Terua* – *Tekia*.

Rabbi Michoel Gourarie lectures on a wide range of topics with a special emphasis on Personal Growth and Self Development. He is the director of "Bina" in Sydney, Australia.

Art by Yamit Presman. Yamit is a quilling artist who takes her inspiration from Jewish traditions, Judaism as a whole, and especially from Chasidism. @quilling_artist1, yamit.presman@gmail.com.



SLICE OF LIFE

My 9/11 Rosh Hashana by Rabbi Menachem Posner



The image is seared into my mind. Walking over the Williamsburg Bridge from Brooklyn to Manhattan in the early morning, looking to the right, and seeing giant plumes of smoke rising from the spot where the Twin Towers had stood just days before.

New Yorkers don't generally talk to strangers. But everything was different in those days after 9/11. We were one city, one people. The fear had touched us all in a place that was deeper than race, socioeconomic status or culture. We were all humans in need of comfort.

My friend Dani and I crossed the bridge together with a cyclist. He told us that he was going away. He did not know where, and he didn't care. He just needed to get out of New York to escape the terrible destruction that had happened there.

But we weren't going far. It was the first day of Rosh Hashana, and I was on my way to blow shofar for a small congregation of elderly retirees in Gramercy Park.

In my hand, I had a leather bag with a shofar inside of it. Since I did not yet own a shofar of my own (I was 18 at the time), I had borrowed one from my aunt and uncle. Its mouthpiece was riddled with tooth marks made by my overenthusiastic cousins, but it made a fine sound. I had spent a few hours in my dorm room practicing the day before, and I was sure that I would be able to blow it well.

I was accompanied by Dani, whom I had met in Russia the summer before, when we were co-

counselors at the Chabad camp outside of Moscow. His parents were longtime refuseniks, and he knew Russian even though he had grown up in Israel. I, on the other hand, had learned a handful of words from my campers. Our common language was Hebrew, and we struck up a friendship (today, he is a Chabad emissary in S. Petersburg, and we still keep in touch).

And there we walked in the early dawn light, smelling the smoke of destruction and wondering how exactly the world would survive the new year.

When we arrived at the synagogue – a narrow affair sandwiched between walk-up apartments, Chinese laundries and convenience stores – we felt like we were sucked into a different era.

The once-grand but never large lobby bore fading photos of the congregation's Hebrew school, none more recent than the 1970s, and the smell of musty carpets and aged books pervaded the building.

As we entered the sanctuary (according to a plaque on the wall it had been paneled in the 1950s), we saw perhaps a half-dozen men scattered throughout the room. Some pews were so covered with old books and pamphlets, there was no room to sit. Near the front sat the rabbi.

Wrapped in his tallit, the rabbi turned to greet us. He wore a white kittel with silver braid, the likes of which I had never seen before, which seemed to be nearly as old as he was. He wore his beard in a neatly kept goatee. Known in Yiddish as a *komatz berdel*, the style had been popular among rabbis decades before I was born.

"We don't hurry on Rosh Hashana," he said in Yiddish, apparently apologizing for the weak showing. "By the time we are ready to start, we will have several dozen people here."

He spoke with a grand confidence that meshed well with his strong Hungarian-Jewish accent. We soon learned that he had once been a well-known Yiddish radio personality and political activist who was famed for his oratory skills.

The rabbi began the service by belting out "*Adon Olam*" in a tune I had never heard before but which has stuck with me until this day. One by one, worshippers trickled in. I do not know if the rabbi's "several dozen" ever materialized, but there was a motley crew of Jews – the men downstairs and the women above – mostly in their 70s and 80s.

After Torah reading, it was time for the rabbi's sermon. He spoke powerfully about "the evil men who knocked down those towers," assuring his congregation (and perhaps himself) that G-d would surely bring them to justice.

It would be the rabbi's first year not blowing the

shofar himself, and he was not quite ready to give up his sacred duty. He stood with me at the bimah in the center of the sanctuary and read along with me the mystical prayers said by the shofar-blower.

After reciting the blessings, I closed my eyes and blew with all my might. I blew for the souls that had been cruelly snuffed out on 9/11. I blew for the congregation, wishing them another year of life and health. I blew for my generation, realizing that we were entering into an era when security was not something that we could ever take for granted. And I blew for G-d, who had a reason for the hammer-blow that had rammed into our world.

As we chatted with the congregants after services, it became clear that they were agitated and not very clear about what was happening just a few blocks away. "It's that zero ground thing," offered one woman, referring to the site of the attacks, which had been dubbed ground zero. "That's why there are so few people in shul; they were scared away by that zero ground."

There was a man in the synagogue from Brooklyn who was spending the holiday with his elderly mother in a nearby Beth Israel Hospital. He asked us to accompany him there to blow shofar for her and for another man who was in the hospital.

As we approached the hospital, we were greeted by walls covered with photocopied pages, each one with a photo, name, and brief description of an individual – a stark reminder of the terrible trauma that Manhattan was living through. People were still missing under the rubble, and family members were desperate for news.

We blew shofar for the two elderly people and shared a meal with their children. Homemade gefilte fish, sweetmeats and compote were a much-welcomed repast at that time of the afternoon.

Dani and I then spent the rest of the afternoon walking through the halls of the hospital, offering to blow shofar for any Jews who had not heard it. Along the way we met the Jewish chaplain, and he was happy to assign us certain floors, thus easing his burden.

We returned the following day for a repeat performance, and then remained in Manhattan until nightfall when we took a car service back home.

As we rode back to Brooklyn, the driver played the radio. For the first time since the attacks, there was more than just news updates. Ads, talk shows, the regular programming was coming back on the air. It felt good to hear the usual irreverence of New York AM radio. It meant that we were still alive, still ourselves.

And with that, we were ready for the Jewish year.

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Rosh Hashana and Shofar

Many Chabad-Lubavitch Centers world-wide have always offered special outdoor Shofar Blowing ceremonies on Rosh Hashana. To find a Shofar service for Rosh Hashana day Tuesday, September 7 or Wednesday, September 8, or services near you, visit chabad.org.

New Emissaries

Rabbi Yisroel and and Mussie Gottlieb are new emissaries in **Kiryat Gat, Israel**. They are specifically involved with the 10,000 Russian speaking residents of the city.

Rabbi Nissi and Mushka Naparstek are opening a new Chabad Center in **Maple Grove, Minnesota**. Maple Grove is the eighth largest city in the state of Minnesota and is considered the retail, cultural and medical center of the northwest region of the area.

Today Is...

28 Elul

"G-d's blessing brings wealth."¹ This is so in general, but especially to whoever gives of his time to occupy himself with the community's needs in matters of charity and strengthening Judaism; as the saying goes, "G-d does not remain in debt". For every good thing a person does, he is recompensed grandly by G-d, with children, health and livelihood, in abundance.

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IT HAPPENED ONCE

"I know that this is some kind of Jewish object, and for years I've been hoping to meet

The reunion was particularly emotional, especially when Leibel showed his elder brother the long-lost shofar and told him how it had come to him. And everyone marveled over the mysterious ways of Divine Providence.

THOUGHTS

THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

On Rosh Hashana we accept G-d's kingship over the world, metaphorically erecting a "structure of sovereignty." To construct a physical building, three building materials are used: stones, earth (dust) and water. In the spiritual sense, these correspond to the letters of the prayer book, a sense of humility, and our tears. By reciting our prayers humbly on Rosh Hashana and with tears that come from the heart, we establish G-d's Kingship over all of creation. (*Sefer Maamarim Kuntreisim*)

Wishing you a *Gemar chasima tova*,
Shana Tova U'mesuka, A good, sweet year



Shabbat ends 8:04 PM