

IN LOVING MEMORY OF
Reb **Moshe Boruch** ben Reb **Yakov** ע"ה
Fishman

Passed away on Shabbat Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei, 27 Adar, 5777

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Nitzavim, 5778
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF
 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766
 Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765
 Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה
Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766
 Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)
 ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה
Ekman (Santiago, Chile)
 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.
 AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov
 DEDICATED BY
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel** שיחיי
Shagalov

The most essential matter is that "so shall it be for us, in actuality." Moreover, indeed, it has already been, in the past tense. In particular, our Rebbes and leaders have revealed to us that the publication of the coming of Moshiach is in the newspapers.¹ This has actually occurred in recent times, as several newspapers throughout the world have publicized (and we should increase the publicity) that "**Behold, he (Melech HaMoshiach) is coming.**"² Immediately and literally speaking, **he should have already come**, below ten handbreadths³ and in a manner that is manifest for the entire world to see, and especially "for the eyes of all of Israel."⁴ And may this occur in actuality, immediately!

(from the talk of Shabbos Parshas Netzavim 5751, Second day of Rosh Hashanah, and Shabbos Parshas Vayelech, 6 Tishrei, 5752)

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1. See *Sefer HaSichos Toras Shalom*, p. 12: "The Rebbe (the Alter Rebbe) has said that Moshiach will appear in the gazettin (newspapers) ... all the Jews will be ready for the coming of Moshiach as if the newspapers reported that he is coming..."

2. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8. And in *Shir HaShirim Rabba* on the verse.

3. [An expression frequently used by the Rebbe to denote that what will occur is not just a metaphor or even a spiritual reality, but that it will be so in the domain that we inhabit, within the confines of the physical world. Translator's note.]

4. End of Parshas *Brocha*.

The most essential matter is: the true and complete Redemption, truly immediately!

Several signs indicate the imminence of the Redemption, primarily the statement of our Sages¹ many generations ago that: "All the deadlines have passed, and the matter depends solely on Teshuvah [repentance, return]." My sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation clarified that Teshuvah had already been achieved, and that we "all stand ready,"² and we have been ready for quite some time.

*(The blessing of the Rebbe Shlita, after the Annulment of the Vows,
Erev Rosh Hashanah, 5752)*

LIKKUTEI SICHOT

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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Volume X: *Devarim*

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In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

1. *Sanhedrin* 97:2.

2. The expression of my Sainted father-in-law in his letter of 26 Adar I 5698
- [published in] his *Igros Kodesh* vol. 4, p. 279. And see *HaYom Yom* 15 Teves.

BESURAS HAGEULO The Announcement Of The Redemption

2

NITZAVIM

G-D'S BLESSING

There is a well-known statement by the Alter Rebbe,¹ quoting the Maggid of Mezeritch, who quoted the Baal Shem Tov, explaining why we do not recite the blessing for the new month on the *Shabbos* preceding Rosh HaShanah:

The seventh month, which is “the first of the months of the year,”² is blessed by G-d Himself on the *Shabbos* of blessing, the last *Shabbos* of Elul. With the power [imparted by this blessing], the Jews bless the 11 [coming] months.³

1. See *Koveitz Michtavim*, 1; printed in *Tehillim Ohel Yosef Yitzchak*, p. 193; *HaYom Yom*, entry 25 Elul.

2. The Alter Rebbe is borrowing the Torah's words (*Shmos* 12:2), but changing their intent. For here the emphasis is on the word “year.” [And thus the month referred to is Tishrei, not Nissan.]

The use of an accepted phrase for a different intent is an established practice. See *Tosafos, Chulin* 68a, entry *Adam*; note, however, *Tosafos, Kiddushin* 48a, entry *Ileimah*. See also the sources quoted in *Yad Malachi*, sec. 374; *S'dei Chemed, Klallim Lamed*, sec. 98.

3. That the power required for the Jews to bless the coming 11 months is imparted by G-d's blessing of the month of Elul, is — as are all concepts of *P'nimiyus HaTorah* — alluded to in *Nigleh*, the revealed Torah law. The *Pesikta deRabbi Kahana*, ch. 5, states: “Until the Jews left Egypt, the Holy One, blessed be He, sat and calculated... and ordained the new months. When the Jews left Egypt... He charged them with this task... From that time onward, they are entrusted to them.”

The words “charged” and “entrusted” indicate that G-d gave the Jews His power to ordain new months.

See also the *Magen Avraham* 417:1, which states that the present custom of blessing the month echoes the sanctification of the new month by the court.

We can all see (in this year of miracles) how the signs of Redemption mentioned by our Sages have been fulfilled. This includes the sign cited in *Yalkut Shimoni*¹ (which has been mentioned recently several times):

"In the year the King Moshiach will be revealed, the kings of all the nations of the world will struggle with each other... the king of Persia will provoke the Arabian king; the Arabian king will [then] go to *Aram*² for advice... All the nations of the world will be in turmoil and terror... And (G-d) will say to them (Israel), "My children, do not be afraid, all that I have done I have done only for your sake... Do not fear, the time for your Redemption has arrived!..."

The *Yalkut* then continues:

When the King Moshiach comes he will stand on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash [Holy Temple] and will proclaim to Israel, 'Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived!'"

(From the talk of Wednesday, Parshas Netzavim-Vayeilech, 22 Elul, 5750)

1. *Yeshayahu*, *remez* 499; Also in *P'sikta Rabasi*, 37 (s.v. *kumi ori*).
2. In the *Pesikta* there [the version is] "to Edom."

as “countenance,” also means “inner dimension.” Thus any desire emanating from G-d’s inner dimension will surely be associated with life and goodness.

This will be revealed on the material plane, for G-d’s essence is connected to our material reality. And so it is that every Jew will be inscribed for a good and sweet year, filled with open and apparent blessings.

(Adapted from *Sichos Rosh HaShanah* and *Sichos Simchas Beis HaShoevah*, 5723)



It is written:⁴ *atem nitzavim hayom*, “You are standing today.” *Hayom*, “today,” refers to Rosh HaShanah,⁵ the day of judgment, as it is written:⁶ “And it came to pass (*hayom*) on that day,” which the *Targum* renders: “the day of awesome judgment.” [And on that day,] “You are standing,”⁷ triumphant in the judgment.

On the *Shabbos* before Rosh HaShanah, which is the last *Shabbos* of Elul,⁸ we read the portion *Atem Nitzavim*. This includes the blessing of the Holy One, blessed be He, on the *Shabbos* on which the seventh month is blessed. It is a month which is satiated — and which satiates all of Israel — with manifold goodness for the entire [coming] year.

The commentaries⁹ explain that the verse: “You are standing today... to enter into a covenant,” introduces the concept of mutual responsibility; that each Jew serves as a guarantor for every other, as it is said:¹⁰ “All Israel are responsible one for another.”

Several questions arise:

a) What is the connection between the latter interpretation and the one offered by the Baal Shem Tov?¹¹

b) We find¹² that although the covenant of mutual responsibility was established by Moshe our teacher, it did not take effect until the Jewish people actually entered *Eretz Yisrael*.

4. *Devarim* 29:9.

5. See *Paneach Razeh*, *Parshas Nitzavim*; *Likkutei Torah*, beginning of *Parshas Nitzavim*.

6. *Iyov* 2:1.

7. See *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Nitzavim*, sec. 1.

8. See *Tosafos*, *Megillah* 31b, entry *Klallos*; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 428:4; *Likkutei Torah*, *ibid*.

9. *Or HaChayim*, *Kli Yakor* on above verse.

10. *Shavuos* 39a; *Sanhedrin* 27a.

11. For as explained in the *sichah* for *Parshas Toldos* in this series, all the interpretations of a word or verse share a connection to each other.

12. See *Sanhedrin* 43b.

Why didn't the concept of mutual responsibility take effect as soon as the covenant was established?

WHO CAN SERVE AS A GUARANTOR?

The above questions can be resolved by clarifying the concept of mutual responsibility. Logically, one would only accept as a guarantor a person who was greater (with regard to the matter at hand) than the person entering the covenant. For example, when a poor man applies for a loan, one accepts a rich man as a guarantor. One would not accept a poor man as a guarantor for a rich one.

This is not the case with regard to the mutual responsibility of the Jewish people. Every Jew, even the lowest, is responsible for all the rest. Moreover, this is expressed in Torah law with regard to the blessings recited before the performance of a *mitzvah*. Although he has already fulfilled a *mitzvah* himself, every Jew — even one on a very low level — can recite a blessing for another Jew — even one on the highest level, because “All Israel are responsible one for another.”¹³

WHEN THE FOOT BECOMES A HEAD

The Alter Rebbe interprets¹⁴ the above verse to mean that the Jewish people are a single entity. This leads to a further concept. In the human body, every limb complements every other. For example, the feet possess a certain quality which the head does not, and in this way, the feet complement the head. Similarly with regard to the ten levels within the Jewish people mentioned in this passage: “the hewers of wood” and “the drawers of water” possess a certain advantage over “your heads,” and complement the latter.

13. *Rashi, Rosh HaShanah 29a*, entry *Af al pi*; *Shulchan Aruch HaRav 197:6*.

14. *Likkutei Torah, ibid.*

In an ultimate sense, free choice involves choosing without regard to any factor or consideration other than the initiative of the one who chooses. When a person's choice is motivated by a reason, it is as if that reason *forced* him to choose; this cannot be considered free choice.²²

How then can G-d's “choos[ing of] our heritage for us” be associated with the sounding of the *shofar*? If His choice is dependent on the sounding of the *shofar*, how can it be considered free?

These questions can be answered by referring to the above concepts. The two aspects of sounding the *shofar* associated with the performance of the *mitzvah* and the Divine service of *teshuvah* do not relate to G-d's essence. Instead, they draw down merely the revealed aspects of G-dliness — an arousal from above that is dependent on an arousal from below.

The *bittul* of the soul's essence, which is expressed by the coronation of G-d through the sounding of the *shofar*, relates to G-d's essence, tapping that level of the soul on which Jews are one with G-d. And at that level, G-d chooses the Jews freely; the sounding of the *shofar* is not what causes Him to choose.²³

UNLIMITED BLESSING

G-d's essence knows no bounds. Since the influence drawn down by the sounding of the *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah is rooted in G-d's essence, this influence is not restricted by any limitations of the spiritual cosmos. The influence is drawn down precisely as He desires it to be. And what He desires is certainly good, as it is written:²⁴ “In the countenance of the King, there is life.” *Penai*, translated here

22. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1309 and pgs. 1340-1342.

23. See the *maamar* entitled *Yivchar Lanu*, 5703, sec. 14, which states: “Drawing down [G-d's] will from [His essence] is not an imperative, for this comes from His essence, which is not prompted by an arousal at all.”

24. *Mishlei 16:15*.

Shofar. *Hilchos Shofar* contains a description of the laws of sounding the *shofar*. It does not mention *teshuvah*, for this dimension transcends the *mitzvos* and is only alluded to by the *shofar*.¹⁹

This is reflected in the wording used by the *Rambam*: “Although the sounding of the *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah is a decree from the Torah.” In other words, although it is fundamentally a *mitzvah*, “it also contains an allusion,” i.e., it refers to *teshuvah*, which transcends the *mitzvos*.

c) The aspect of sounding the *shofar* which brings about G-d’s coronation. This aspect transcends the *mitzvah* of sounding the *shofar* entirely, and cannot be communicated even by an allusion. For an allusion reflects a thrust toward revelation, while the coronation of G-d, by contrast, brings forth the *bittul* that lies at the foundation of the soul [which is entirely above revelation].²⁰

CHOOSING FREELY

Based on the above, we can appreciate the connection between the sounding of the *shofar* and the verse:²¹ “He chooses our heritage for us,” which is recited before the sounding of the *shofar*.

19. The allusion reflected by immersion in the *mikveh* is, by contrast, mentioned in *Hilchos Mikvaos* because it is of a more particular nature. Although the *mikveh* is intended to purify blemishes, it involves “the purification of one’s soul... from base character traits.... by immersion in the waters of pure knowledge,” and not an all-encompassing movement of *teshuvah*. Therefore it relates to *Hilchos Mikvaos*.

20. The allusion to this quality in the *shofar* is in the fact that it is narrow at its lower end. This narrowness is not a result of sin, but rather a reflection of the fact that the person feels as a separate and lowly entity, rather than an extension of G-d’s unbounded essence where his soul has its roots. This therefore affects G-d’s essence. See the conclusion of the *maamar* entitled *Shir HaMaalos*, 5703, and the conclusion of the series of *maamarim* beginning Rosh HaShanah, 5695.

21. *Tehillim* 47:4.

This helps us understand why “All Israel are responsible one for another.” For every single Jew possesses a particular advantage over every other, and can therefore serve as a guarantor for him.

LEVELS OF ONENESS

In the above *maamar*, the Alter Rebbe cites the verse:¹⁵ “When the leaders of the people assembled the tribes of Israel,” and explains that “the people come together to be united as one.” In this vein, he refers to the analogy of the human body mentioned above, that every limb complements each other, and that all need each other. And he concludes: “The entire Jewish people are a single complete entity.”

The wording of the Alter Rebbe is very precise. Thus although the phrase “come together to be united as one” may appear to contain a redundancy, each phrase contributes something. After stating that every limb complements every other, and that all are interdependent, the Alter Rebbe concludes: “The entire Jewish people are a single complete entity.”

To explain: there are three levels in the unity of the Jewish people: “come together,” “united,” and “as one.” “Come together” is stated in the verse cited previously. The Alter Rebbe adds that the Jews’ togetherness is based on unity, and he explains the nature of this unity by stating that every individual complements every other, and that we all need each other. He then adds that there is a deeper level; the Jews are “as one.” He then amplifies this thought with the statement: “The entire Jewish people are a single complete entity.”

To clarify: “Together” reflects the purposeful joining of distinct entities that do not share any inherent connection. For this reason, the Alter Rebbe uses the terms “united” and “as one” to indicate that the bond between the Jewish people

15. *Devarim* 33:5.

is deeper than that. The Jews are a group of distinct people who come together “to fulfill Your will with a complete heart.”¹⁶ But they also share a deeper connection; they are “united as one.”

“United” implies togetherness reinforced by an internal connection. When different entities come together for a shared purpose, their individuality is preserved. When they are “united,” the individual potential each possesses is joined to the others. Each one adds a quality which the others lack.

“As one” points to an even deeper bond. When entities are “united,” they are still referred to in the plural. “As one” refers to a singular entity. This is reflected in the analogy of the human body, which though comprised of many limbs and organs is a single organism. Not only do the limbs complement each other, they merge to create a single entity.¹⁷

IT'S NOT BAD TO STICK OUT

The above, however, prompts a question: Since the bond implied by the term “as one” indicates a deeper connection than mere unity, why does the Alter Rebbe mention unity at all? And why does he elaborate upon it, employing the example of the head and feet?

This indicates that being united possesses an advantage over being simply “one.”

Consider: As mentioned, a person’s limbs and organs are part of one body. But that body is able to function as it should only when each of its limbs is working properly. If the func-

16. Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur liturgy.

17. These two qualities which relate to the unity of the Jewish people on Rosh HaShanah are also reflected in the *mitzvah* of the four species on Sukkos. For as explained in *Chassidus*, the qualities which are hidden on Rosh HaShanah are revealed on Sukkos.

Each of the four species reflects the concept of unity (see the series of *maamarim* entitled *VeKachah*, 5637, sec. 87), and all four together constitute one *mitzvah* [*Sefer HaMitzvos LeHaRambam, Shores 11*].

These are decrees of the Torah.... Nevertheless, there is an allusion to the concept... to purify one’s soul from its impurity and base character traits... by immersion in the waters of pure knowledge.

This concept, though related to the Divine service of *teshuvah*, is stated in *Hilchos Mikvaos* and not in *Hilchos Teshuvah* because it describes the rationale for immersion in the *mikveh*. Why then is the rationale for sounding the *shofar* not explained in *Hilchos Shofar*?

The *Rambam*’s statements also provoke another question: The *Talmud* states:⁶ “Say before Me... verses reflecting My Kingship to make Me King over you. By what means? Via the *shofar*.” The *shofar* is thus the medium which brings about the coronation of G-d.¹⁸

Why does the *Rambam* not mention this allusion?

The answer to these questions requires that we understand three elements involved in the sounding of the *shofar*:

a) The *mitzvah* of sounding the *shofar*, as expressed in all the particular laws which apply to it. The *Rambam* considers this as one of the 613 *mitzvos*, and mentions these laws in *Hilchos Shofar*.

b) The concept of *teshuvah*. This is alluded to by the sounding of the *shofar*. *Teshuvah* reflects a rung above the observance of *mitzvos*. To point to this quality, the *Rambam* mentions this concept in *Hilchos Teshuvah*, and not in *Hilchos*

17. Apparently, there is a printing error in the standard text of the *Mishneh Torah*. It would seem that the text in *Mikvaos* should read: “When he immerses himself in the waters of pure knowledge, he becomes pure.”

18. This is the simple meaning of the quote from *Rosh HaShanah* cited previously. Similarly, this is one of the intentions which we are to have in mind when performing the *mitzvah* of sounding the *shofar*, as stated in *Likkutei Torah, Devarim* 56d, and other Chassidic texts. See also *I Melachim* 1:39 [which speaks about sounding a *shofar* at the coronation of a mortal king.]

The *Tosefta* (*Rosh HaShanah* 1:11) mentions other reasons for sounding the *shofar*. These and similar reasons in other statements by our Sages reflect other dimensions of the *mitzvah*.

vos — are reflected in the sounding of the *shofar*.¹⁵ And, as is true with regard to all matters of *P'nimiyus HaTorah*, this concept is also alluded to in *Nigleh*, the revealed dimension of Torah law.

In *Hilchos Teshuvah*,¹⁶ the *Rambam* writes:

Although the sounding of the *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah is a decree from the Torah, it also contains an allusion. [It is as if the *shofar* is saying:] “Awake.... Turn to G-d in *teshuvah*.”

A question arises: Why does the *Rambam* state this concept in *Hilchos Teshuvah* rather than in *Hilchos Shofar*? Although the *Rambam* is speaking about *teshuvah*, since he is explaining the motivating principle for the *mitzvah* of *shofar*, seemingly, it would have been more appropriate to include it in *Hilchos Shofar*.

To cite a parallel: The *Rambam* concludes his *Hilchos Mikvaos*¹⁷ with an explanation of the motivating principle for immersion in a *mikveh*:

15. On this basis, we can appreciate the explanation in the *maamar* of the Alter Rebbe entitled *B'Chochmah Yivneh Bayis* [5564] (printed in 5722; see also the other *maamarim* cited there) regarding the rationale for the recitation of *Malchiyos*, *Zichronos*, and *Shofros*: “In order for the influence [of the *mitzvah*] to be maintained, it is necessary that it be sealed by the Torah.”

On the surface, this is problematic, for with regard to other *mitzvos*, it is not necessary to bring proof from the Torah. Why then is this necessary with regard to sounding the *shofar*?

The situation can be explained as follows: A seal is necessary when influence is drawn from a level which transcends the spiritual cosmos, as is the case with *teshuvah*, and certainly with regard to the crowning of G-d.

This also explains the continuation of the *maamar*: “As we see with regard to the mysteries and secrets of the Torah in the *Zohar*, the author of these concepts would always quote a verse from the Torah as support. For without [such support], the mystic secrets he taught could not be maintained.”

In this instance as well, since the mystic secrets reflect the dimension of the Torah which transcends the limits of the spiritual cosmos, support from a Torah verse is necessary.

16. *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:4.

tion of even one of the limbs is impaired, the entire body is imperfect.¹⁸ This indicates that the individual nature of every limb is important.

Yes, there is an advantage to being “at one” over being “united,” for the fundamental nature of every limb and organ is the fact that it forms part of a complete organism. But this essential quality is not reflected in the external functioning of each organ, for in its function, each organ expresses its individual nature. This is the advantage of being “united” — that even though each limb (i.e. each individual Jew) exists as a distinct entity, all the limbs (i.e. all the Jews) are unified and complement each other.¹⁹

The Alter Rebbe’s explanation of “unity” is more detailed because our Divine service is directed towards realizing that goal.²⁰ Accordingly, every Jew, as he functions within his own identity as a soul enclined within a body, must be “of a humble spirit in the presence of every person.”²¹ For every other person possesses qualities that can complement his own.

18. Man is an intermediate creation, including elements from the highest peaks and the lowest depths. Therefore he must have both a head and feet (see the series of *maamarim* beginning Rosh HaShanah, 5702).

The reason mankind must possess the lower potentials is *because* of their mean nature; our ultimate perfection requires the possession of such “low” qualities. To cite a parallel: Man’s body is fashioned from the dust, the lowest form of inanimate matter. This reflects the tremendous power of our souls; which descend from the highest level (*Torah Or, Bereishis*, p. 4a; the *maamar* entitled *Zeh HaYom*, 5700, sec. 2).

Since the feet — because they are on a lowly plane — are an essential element in man’s consummate perfection, they are also granted an advantage with regard to a person’s revealed powers; they support the head.

19. To refer to another *Chassidic* concept: This reflects the advantage of the quality alluded to by the word *echad* over the simple oneness implied by the word *yachid*. See *Torah Or, Va'eira*, p. 55b.

20. To cite a parallel, *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1334-1335, speaks of an advantage possessed by man’s perception of G-d’s oneness {as reflected in the verse (*Devarim* 4:39): “And you shall know today...”} over the revelation of that oneness from above {as reflected in the verse (*Devarim* 4:35): “And you have been shown to know...”}.

21. *Avos* 4:12.

FROM THE INSIDE OUT

The two levels implied by the words “united” and “at one,” are dependent on each other. The external unity that connects our people as individuals enhances the inner bond, which unites us “as one.” Were the individual elements to be entirely discrete entities, it would be impossible for them to share an inner bond.

Bittul, the external selflessness that allows for sharing with and receiving from each other, expresses the fact that ultimately every person is more than himself; he is a member of the Jewish people at large.

Since the inner nature of the entire Jewish people is “at one,” our external dimensions are unified and complementary.¹⁸ Were each person’s inner dimensions to be merely personal — for his personal qualities are, after all, what is most important to him — he would not require the support and influence of others. Nevertheless, because the inner dimension of the Jewish people is one, their external dimensions reflect that inner oneness and are therefore complementary.

ENTERING ERETZ YISRAEL

On this basis, we can understand why the Jews’ covenant of mutual responsibility only took effect with our entry into *Eretz Yisrael*. The word *areivim*, which means “mutually responsible” also means “mixed together.” The identities of the entire Jewish people are intermingled, for our people is “united, as one.”

Such unity is possible only by virtue of a transcendent light,²² and our people were not exposed to that transcendent light until they entered *Eretz Yisrael*. For it is only in *Eretz Yisrael* that we will fulfill G-d’s ultimate intent in creation,

22. See *Tanya*, *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 12; *Likkutei Torah*, *Vayikra* 23c.

“HEAD OF THE YEAR”

Names employed by the Torah are chosen because they describe the true nature of the things to which they refer, expressing their very life-force.¹² This also applies to Rosh HaShanah, which literally means “head of the year.”¹³

The head has several unique aspects:

a) The head is the most elevated and sophisticated of all the body’s limbs;

b) The head includes the life-energy for all the limbs of the body within it; and

c) The head directs the functioning of all the limbs.

Parallels to all three qualities apply with regard to Rosh HaShanah:

a) The Divine service which characterizes Rosh HaShanah — the crowning of G-d as King — affects G-d’s essence, a level which is above the Divine service carried out throughout the year.

b) Rosh HaShanah is also a day of *teshuvah*. *Teshuvah* relates to the *mitzvos*, but stands above them. Indeed, it can be said to include them.

c) The good resolutions made on Rosh HaShanah influence one’s observance of *mitzvos* in the year to come, affecting them as the head directs the limbs of the body.

THE SHOFAR’S MESSAGE

With regard to Rosh HaShanah, it is said:¹⁴ “The *mitzvah* of the day involves the *shofar*.” Based on the above explanations, it follows that all three factors mentioned above — the coronation of G-d, *teshuvah*, and the observance of the *mitz-*

12. *Tanya*, *Shaar HaYichud VebaEmunah*, ch. 1.

13. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Devarim* 41c; *Ateres Rosh*, in the beginning.

14. *Rosh HaShanah* 27a.

quote G-d as saying:⁷ “Accept My Kingship, and afterwards accept My decrees.” Therefore *teshuvah*, which serves to atone for failures in fulfilling the King’s decrees, is relevant only after His Kingship is accepted.

Our acceptance of G-d as King relates to His essence — a level above all revelations. The observance of the *mitzvos* relates to G-d’s will as it has come into revelation, for all the *mitzvos* are expressions of His will.

Teshuvah, which atones for transgressions of His will, relates to a higher level of G-dliness, but one which still shares a connection to His will.⁸ For a level which *totally* transcends G-d’s will must also transcend the service which repents for transgressions of that will. Thus *teshuvah* still relates to revealed levels of G-dliness. The acceptance of G-d as King, however, relates to G-d’s essence, which transcends all revelations.⁹

From this, we can appreciate the uniqueness of the souls of the Jewish people — that they can affect G-d’s very essence and evoke in Him a desire to be King. To be able to affect G-d’s essence, however, it is necessary to express the inner *bittul* that lies at the center of every Jewish soul.¹⁰ This is expressed in our request of G-d:¹¹ “Reign over the entire world in Your glory.”

7. *Mechilta*, Shmos 20:3; *Toras Kohanim*, Acharei, ch. 13; *Yalkut Shimoni* to Shmos, *loc. cit.*

8. For this reason, in several texts of *Chassidus* (e.g., the series of *maamarim* beginning Rosh HaShanah, 5691), *teshuvah* is described as relating to “the depths of His will,” or to “the Master of the will.”

9. See the explanation of this concept in the series of *maamarim* beginning Rosh HaShanah, 5703.

10. When the essence of a Jewish soul is revealed, it draws down G-d’s essence, or becomes a vehicle for that essence which is rooted in it. (See the *maamar* entitled *Mi E-l Kamocho*, 5627, sec. 2.)

11. Rosh HaShanah liturgy, *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 274.

and make the world a dwelling for Him.²³ And therefore it was not until our entry into *Eretz Yisrael* that the covenant of mutual responsibility took effect.²⁴

IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH

On this basis, we can understand the connection between the Baal Shem Tov’s interpretation of *Atem Nitzavim* — that the Jews stand victorious in the judgment of Rosh HaShanah — with the statement that this verse refers to the covenant of mutual responsibility.

By “standing... together,” “united as one,” without thought as to who is on a higher plane and who is on a lower one, we subsume our personal identities amidst the Jewish people as a whole. This will surely cause us to emerge victorious in judgment, for the Jewish nation as a whole is surely good. And this will cause us to be inscribed for a good and sweet year in the year to come.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech*, 5718, 5719)



23. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Shelach* in this series, where this concept is explained.

24. The covenant of mutual responsibility for the observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* presupposes a united nation, a union established between a number of souls functioning as self-conscious entities encloded in bodies. This level was revealed with our entry into *Eretz Yisrael*.

The potential for such unity stems from the fact that the Jewish people are essentially “at one.” This reflects an inner oneness at the core of our souls, above and beyond the level encloded in our bodies. Therefore it was appropriate that the covenant for mutual responsibility was established while the Jews were in the desert, at which time our existence was more spiritually oriented. Similarly, it was significant that Moshe — characterized by the ultimate *bittul* of *mah* — was the one who “negotiated” the covenant. See *Tanya*, ch. 32.

ROSH HASHANAH

WHEN G-D IS TO BE FOUND

On the verse,¹ “Seek G-d when He is to be found,” our Sages comment:² “These are the 10 days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.”

The wording of our Sages’ statement is problematic. On one hand, the expression “the 10 days *between* Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur,” seems to imply that Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are not included in these days.³ Nevertheless, the expression “These are the 10 days...” indicates that Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur are indeed included in the count, for there are only seven days *between* Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.

This compels us to understand that there are two elements to the observance of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur: a) an essential quality which transcends the service of *teshuvah*, and b) the service of *teshuvah* which characterizes all 10 days.

First, our Divine service must center on the essential aspect of Rosh HaShanah. Afterwards comes the aspect associated with *teshuvah*. Thus, there are 10 days of *teshuvah* between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, for the aspect of

1. *Yeshayahu* 55:6.

2. *Rosh HaShanah* 18a.

3. Compare to *Taanis* 5a; see also *S’dei Chemed, Klallim Beis*, sec. 72.

teshuvah associated with Rosh HaShanah comes after the essential aspect of Rosh HaShanah.⁴

MAKING HIM KING

Teshuvah transcends all other *mitzvos*. It can thus atone for all blemishes in the observance of *mitzvos*, for it reaches a deeper point in the soul than is reached by the other *mitzvos*.⁵ And as mentioned above, since the essential aspect comes before the service of *teshuvah*, it follows that this aspect of Rosh HaShanah transcends even *teshuvah*.

What is the essential aspect of Rosh HaShanah? The coronation of G-d as King. Thus our Sages quote⁶ G-d as asking: “Say before Me... verses reflecting My Kingship to make Me King over you.”

Until we have accepted G-d as King, serving Him through the observance of *mitzvos* is not relevant. And so our Sages

4. Similarly, there are two dimensions to Yom Kippur: a) the aspect of *teshuvah*; and b) its essential quality, which is revealed at the conclusion of the Ten Days of *Teshuvah*. See the *sichah* for Yom Kippur in this series.

5. See *Likkutei Torah, Vayikra*, p. 26c; *Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Vidui U’Teshuvah*. On this basis, it is possible to explain why, in his reckoning of the 613 *mitzvos* in *Sefer HaMitzvos*, the *Rambam* does not count *teshuvah* (focusing on *vidui*, confession, instead). For *teshuvah* transcends all the *mitzvos*, and includes them all. Thus it can be considered a general command, and is not included in the reckoning of the 613 *mitzvos* (*Sefer HaMitzvos*, General Principle 4).

One cannot argue that *teshuvah* should be counted as one of the *mitzvos* because it involves a particular deed (see pgs. 89-90 above). For *teshuvah* possesses two dimensions:

a) Its essential quality is the sinner’s resolution to observe the Torah and its *mitzvos* in the future. This parallels other commands of a general nature, such as “be holy” (*Vayikra* 19:2), and
b) Regret over one’s past deeds. This parallels the general command “Do not stiffen your necks any longer” (*Devarim* 10:16). As *Sefer HaMitzvos* (*loc. cit.*) mentions, both of these thrusts are general in nature.

The aspect of *teshuvah* that involves deed is the act of *vidui*, confession. And the *Rambam* does count confession as one of the *mitzvos* (positive *mitzvah* 73).

6. *Rosh HaShanah* 16a; 34b.