



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

ראש השנה

אף על פי שתקיעת שופר בראש השנה גזרת הכתוב, רמז יש בו כלומר עורו ישנים משנתכם ונרדמים הקיצו מתרדמתכם וחפשו במעשיכם וחזרו בתשובה וזכרו בוראכם וכו'. (רמב"ם הל' תשובה פ"ג ה"ד)

Although the shofar-blowing of Rosh Hashanah is a Scriptural decree, there is an allusion in it, as if the shofar were saying, "Awake, sleepers, from your sleep! Arise, slumberers, from your slumber! Scrutinise your deeds! Return with repentance! Remember your Creator! ..." (Rambam Hilchos Teshuvah 3:4)

The wording of the Rambam, חזרו בתשובה וזכרו בוראכם, *Return with repentance! Remember your Creator!* poses the following difficulty. It would appear to be that remembering Hashem would be a pre-requisite to *teshuvah*. If so, why does the Rambam reverse the order and only mention it after fulfilling *teshuvah*?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains that the Rambam is not referring here to a basic recognition of Hashem which brings one to do *teshuvah*. Rather, the Rambam is discussing a higher level of awareness of Hashem. The *madreigah* mentioned here is to fulfil the *possuk* in Mishlei (3:6): *בְּכֹל דְרַכֶּיךָ דַּעְהוּ, וְהוּא יַיָּשֶׁר אַרְחֻתֶיךָ*, *In all your ways know Him, and He will smooth your paths*. The Mesilas Yeshorim explains this to convey how all man's thoughts and actions should be totally devoted to doing ה' רצון. Even after one has done *teshuvah* and repented for his misdeeds, there is another lofty level to be reached – to channel all one's actions to fulfil the will of Hashem. Accordingly, the Rambam describes how the *shofar* has the power to arouse in every one of us to also reach this exalted goal. Even if we may not be able to change our lives around, to single-mindedly do everything according to Hashem's bidding, every step in this direction brings us to a higher *madreigah*.

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16b) relates how there are three books opened on Rosh Hashanah during Hashem's judgement of the people. One of these is the book of צדיקים גמורים which Tosafos explains refers to one who has more merits than sins. R' Simcha Zissel of Kelm finds difficulty with this from what Chazal write elsewhere that even one who transgresses a Rabbinic decree is classified as a *rasha*. He explains that the main judgement of man is how close a person is to *teshuvah* and perfection. One who has mostly merits, with most of his yearnings and actions correct, can be deemed to be on the right path and we are confident that he will *shteig* further and reach *sheleimus*.

Furthermore, he explains another famous Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 16a) which encapsulates the *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah: *אמר ל' לפני מלכותי כ'די שתמליכוני עליכם, ויעלה זכרוניכם לפני לטובה: Hashem said, "Recite before Me (pessukim of) Sovereignty so that you should make Me your King, and your remembrance will rise up before Me for your benefit."* What is the shortcut here - how does saying these *pessukim* generate such a positive outcome in our judgement?

R' Simcha Zissel explained, that here too, awareness that Hashem is our King and our subservience to Him, sets us on the path to success. By recognising Hashem's Kingship and internalising this fact, we

are well on the route to improving and perfecting ourselves. A person who finds himself in the presence of a great dignitary will inevitably better his appearance and behaviour since he is under scrutiny. Even more so, with Hashem. When a person internalises *malchiyus*, how Hashem is watching over our every thought, word, and action, this will certainly lead him to conduct himself in a better manner. And as explained, being on the correct path towards fulfilling our spiritual potential and devoting our lives to Hashem, is what is necessary for the *din* on Rosh Hashanah.

May we be *zoche* this Rosh Hashanah, to hear the awakening cry of the *shofar*, internalise the message of *malchiyus* and improve our actions, bringing awareness of Hashem into our being, and through this merit a year full of only *berochah* and *hatzlochah*.

פְּתִיבָה וְחִתִּימָה טוֹבָה