

CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR Shabbos Table

...FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN...

DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

A DAY THAT IS A YEAR

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום

"See, I am giving before you today" (Devarim 11:26).

אתם נצבים היום

"You are standing today" (ibid. 29:9).

Ahrele stared out the window of the Boeing 747 as the plane approached Kennedy airport. His first view of the United States was somewhat...underwhelming.

He felt a twinge in his chest as the plane thundered over drab gray concrete and red brick. So this was America... Oh, well. Hopefully, the wedding hall would be nicer.

He was traveling to the USA for the first time to attend the wedding of his nephew. His sister had moved here from their native England a few years before, and Ahrele had never had a chance to visit.

He liked Golders Green. He felt another twinge as he thought of London. At least it was going to be a short trip.

After collecting his hand luggage, Ahrele waited in line to disembark, passed through customs, and waited at the baggage claim. His chest was definitely hurting now. It seemed like American air didn't agree with him. He gathered his heavy valise and was pushing it out to the airport exit when stabbing pain seared through his left side and he felt like ten thousand pounds were pressing on his chest.

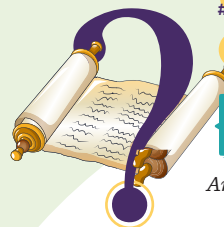
Then he collapsed.

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ראש השנה

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PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles will appear in next week's issue.

- 1 On which day of the week did the first Rosh Hashanah fall? What was the date of the creation of heaven and earth? On which days of the week can Rosh Hashanah never fall?
- 2 Who was born and died on Rosh Hashanah?
- 3 We say in *U'nesaneh Tokef* that all people pass before Hashem on this day like "*bnei maron*." Who are *bnei maron*? What does it mean? (Three explanations)
- 4 We call Hashem the *Melech* and the *Moshel*. What is the difference between the two?
- 5 Can you find nine consecutive letters in the haftorah that are all a chain of the same two letters (e.g., אבאבאבאבא)? Can you find the same thing in Chumash?
- 6 One of the *pesukim* of *Shofros* doesn't mention a shofar! Which one?

GEMATRIA

On Rosh Hashanah Hashem gives fertility to barren women. He did so with Sarah and Chanah. This is alluded to by the *minhag* of eating an apple dipped in honey:

פרו ורבו = 494 = תפוח (apple)

אשה = 306 = דבש

(Imrei Noam)

אב הרחמים = 306 = דבש

(Bnei Yissaschar)





SERIAL >> CHAPTER 2

CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: Avremele and the other inmates of a Siberian prison camp have walked for 15 days for a prisoner exchange. Avremele hears that someone from another camp will risk his life to speak to him.

A

vremele kept walking, looking neither left nor right. A Jew! He hadn't seen a Jew in five years! And now one was going to jump into line behind him. If the guards spotted them or heard them talking, they would be shot instantly. What could be so important to discuss that this Yid would risk his life for it?

Avremele watched the other prison camp, waiting for a sign of movement, an indication as to who this Jew that he would soon be meeting was. Sure enough, he saw someone preparing to step out of line. The man was clearly watching the armed guards carefully, waiting for his opportunity to get across. After struggling to find an opening, he made a break for it! Swiftly, the man dashed between the two camps and fell into step behind Avremele.

There was no time to waste on small talk. "What is so important that you would risk your life? And mine?" Avremele asked.

"A Jew! You are a Jew! I haven't seen one in ten years!"

"And I haven't seen one in five years. But still...?"

"Do you know what tonight is?"

Avremele looked at the setting sun hanging low in the sky. It was a regular late afternoon in late summer in Siberia, which meant freezing temperatures, as always.

"Tonight is Yom Kippur! When I heard there is a Jew in this camp, I knew I had to meet him and find a way to honor Yom Kippur together!"

It all came back to Avremele. Yom Kippur... He didn't know much, but he did remember going to shul with his father and grandfather for the special, holiest night of the year, *Kol Nidrei* night.

"Yom Kippur!" he breathed softly. "We must do something! I don't remember anything. Do you know any of the prayers by heart?"

"My father was the chief chazzan in the main shul in Kishinev," the man said, "and I was the wunderkind. I remember every word. We practiced it so many times."

"Let's try to sing *Kol Nidrei*," Avremele said.

"Are you kidding? The guards will kill us in a second!"

"But it's Yom Kippur."

"I don't know if I still have a voice... I haven't sung a note since coming to Siberia. I haven't heard anyone sing anything in ten years... No one sings in this frozen wasteland."

Still, the man began humming the otherworldly, holy tune of *Kol Nidrei*. The strains of the ancient traditional *niggun*, sung by Jews around the world for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, slowly drifted forth. The atmosphere was instantly changed. No longer did Avremele feel like a prisoner on the frozen tundra. He was a little boy again, wrapped in the awe and wonder of the packed synagogue as the chazzan led the congregation, cloaked in white and holiness...

The former wunderkind increased his volume. It was immediately clear that he had the most beautiful, sweetest voice ever heard on Earth... Or was it just the tune? Entranced, Avremele began to sing along.

Other prisoners turned toward them. At first they stared; then they approached. They broke ranks, one by one, and surrounded the two. These hardened, weather-beaten, tough men were not imprisoned for being Jewish. Many of them were real thugs, sentenced to the *gulag* for unspeakable crimes. But the soulful tune stirred something within every soul. One by one, the men dropped to the ground and sat next to Avremele and the wunderkind of Kishinev. Several began to hum along with the men who were singing this strange tune that they had never heard before but which now pierced their hearts. Some sang; some harmonized. It was an incredible scene.

The singing was getting louder. Of course, the guards noticed. Hardened killers, all of them, they approached the group. One by one, they unslung their automatic rifles from their shoulders and held them in steady hands.

TO BE CONTINUED...

2

DVAR TORAH >>

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

יהי רצון שנהיה לראש ולא לזנב

"Let it be [Hashem's] will that we be [like] a head and not [like] a tail."

This *tefillah* is based on a *pasuk* in *Parshas Ki Savo*:

וַיְתֵּן ה' לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא לְזָנָב וְהָיִיתָ רַק לְמַעַלָּה וְלֹא לְתַתָּה לְמַחֵסֶה

"And Hashem will make you [like] a head and not [like] a tail, and you will be only high and you will not be low" (Devarim 28:13).

**Why are the blessing and *tefillah* doubled?
Can one be both a head and a tail?**

TA'AM V'DA'AS
(RAV MOSHE SHTERNBUCH):

Not only do we ask Hashem to *make* us the head, or leader, of nations, but we should not *act* like a tail. We hope to act with forethought and intelligence, not just follow blindly behind the horse!

OHEV YISRAEL:

Sometimes it is better to be the tail than the head. The Mishnah in *Avos* (4:14) recommends: "Be the tail of lions and not the head of foxes." But we are asking Hashem to make us the head in all situations. We want to be with the lions (i.e., the head), not foxes (the tail), and we want to be the head of the lions, not the tail of the lions!

YITAV LEV (SATMAR):

The extra word לראש asks for us to have strength and inspiration to do Hashem's will. It stands for רצון אבינו שבשמים.

OHR HACHAIM:

We are asking to be under the personal *hashgachah* of Hashem, the "Head" of the universe (*l'rosh*), and we do not want the other heavenly hosts (which are called "tails") to have any involvement with us.

RAMBAN:

We want to be the head of all nations, not the tail of any. Some people are heads of some and tails of others.

We want to be the head of nations now *and* forever. Never do we want to be the tail.



PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF ROSH HASHANA

This section views the procession of *parshiyos* and *Yamim Tovim* as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the *parshah* and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

Rosh Hashanah is one of the central, most important days of *avodah* of the year. It is a lofty day which can bring tremendous closeness between man and his Creator and spark a changed future.

Meaning of the day

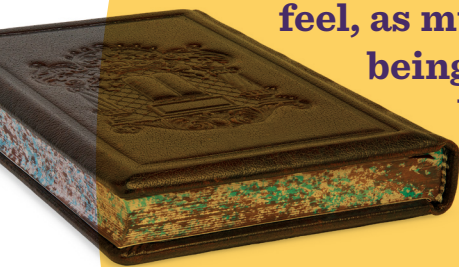
Rosh Hashanah is the day in which the world began. Each year, it is the time to take stock of how things have been going, renew, restart, and refresh, and reestablish our complete acceptance of the *malchus* of Hashem. The affirmation of Hashem's kingship is the primary work of the day; it is the focus of the *machzor* and our goal for the day. To the extent that we rejoice and build our love for Hashem through His kingship, we have used the day properly. The judgement and chance for repentance are auxiliary to that. Sin is hardly mentioned in the work of the day at all.

The yearly cycle

Rosh Hashanah comes after the period of sin and destruction of the summer months and the slow rebuilding of our relationship with Hashem during the latter part of Av and the month of Elul. We are ready to recommit, and that is the beginning of our real *teshuvah*.

AVODAH OF THE DAY:

The work of the day is clearly laid out in the *machzor*. Feel the prayers; feel, as much possible, the loftiness of Hashem; feel the privilege of being important to Him. Surrender your personal calculations before His will. He is offering a Hand, a chance to free ourselves from ourselves. Take it!



ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S RIDDLES:

1. The *Krias HaTorah* on Monday and Thursday usually goes until *sheini* of the *parshah*. Which *parshiyos* go further? ***Devarim* technically goes further: we start *sheini* one *pasuk* earlier than the end of the weekday *leining*. *Ki Sisa* does not go all the way to *sheini*. Till *shelishi*? *Bechukosai*, *Haazinu*. Till *revi'i*? *Nitzavim*, *V'zos Habrachah*. When *Vayeilech* is read alone, it goes till *chamishi*.**
2. Where is Purim referenced in this week's *parshah*?
(אֲנֹכִי הַסֵּתֶר אֶסְתֵּיר פְּנֵי בַיּוֹם הַהוּא (יח:לא). According to the Gemara, this is a reference to Esther.
3. It is well known that **אלול** is spelled with the first letters of the words in *Shir Hashirim* **אני לדודי ודודי לי**. Which words in this week's *parshah* spell *Elul* in the same way? In how many other places can you find *Elul* spelled out that way? (There are 47 in *Tanach*. Can you find one in the *Megillah*?)
**ומל ה' אלקיך את לבבך ואת לבב זרעך (דברים ו:ל)
לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים (אסתר כב:ט)**

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

First day:

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

The haftorah for the first day of Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of *Sefer Shmuel*. It describes the story of Shmuel's birth and the *shirah* of his mother, Chanah.

Chanah is a barren woman married to Elkanah, a great tzaddik who restored the neglected mitzvah of *aliyah l'regel* to *Klal Yisrael*. After many childless years, Chanah advises Elkanah to take another wife. He marries Peninah, a righteous woman, who immediately bears 10 children. Peninah taunts Chanah in order to get her to pray more strongly for children and to complete the suffering she needs in order to merit a child. (This is a mistake, and Penina ultimately loses all her children.)

During one particularly torturous trip to Mishkan Shilo, Peninah taunts Chanah mercilessly, and Elkanah inadvertently adds to Chanah's pain by asking her to move on from her dream of having a child. She goes to *daven* in the Mishkan, and Eli, the *Kohen Gadol*, accuses her of being drunk. This final straw puts Chanah's suffering over the top. She is ready for a child, whom she promises to dedicate to the service of Hashem. After Eli realizes his mistake, he promises that Chanah will have a son.

Shmuel is born that year. Chanah keeps him home for two years, after which she brings him to Eli. (He becomes a dedicated *talmid* and later a *shofet*, a *navi*, and one of *Klal Yisrael's* greatest leaders.) The haftorah concludes with Chanah's song of praise to Hashem.

CONNECTION TO ROSH HASHANA:

Chanah is one of three barren women who were "remembered" on Rosh Hashanah. Chanah's *shirah* describes Hashem's control over everything that happens, all of which is established on Rosh Hashanah. It is an important reminder on the Day of Judgement. Many aspects of *tefillah*, a basic theme of the day, are learned from Chanah's classic prayer.

Chazal find allusions in *Shiras Chanah* to the three parts of Rosh Hashanah *Mussaf*: *Malchuyos*, *Zichronos*, and *Shofros*.

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Ahrele awoke to the sound of beeping. He looked around warily. He was in a bed, and there were tubes running into his arm and an oxygen mask on his face.

Where was he? How did he get here? Where were his belongings?

As his vision cleared, he saw the worried face of his sister. She approached slowly. "Aherele, how do you feel?"

"I... OK... What happened?"

"You had a heart attack as soon as you got out of the airport," she said. "You gave us a real scare."

Aherele sank back against the pillows on his bed. *Airport! Heart attack! In America! Hashem, what does this mean?!*

A white-coated woman bustled into the room. Her name tag read, "Ashley Jones, RN."

"You need to rest, hon," she announced. "Just relax and try to get comfortable."

Aherele spent ten days in the hospital recovering from the heart attack. *B'chasdei Hashem*, he made a full recovery. Needless to say, he had missed the wedding.

The hospital check-out agent asked if he had insurance.

"Sure," Ahrele said, whipping out his British NIH insurance card.

"Sir, do you have American insurance or travelers' insurance? English insurance does not cover your stay in this hospital. If you do not have local insurance, the bill will be thirty thousand dollars."

Aherele was shocked. "Thirty thousand dollars for ten days?!"

A faint smile flickered on the agent's lips. "Welcome to America."

Throughout the long flight home, Ahrele's thoughts were in turmoil. *Hashem*, he thought, *I can accept Your decree that I suffer a heart attack. I accept your decree that I miss my nephew's wedding. But why in America, of all places? Had it struck eight hours earlier, it would have been covered by my insurance in England. In America, it cost me thirty thousand dollars! Why?*

Upon returning home, Ahrele hurried to consult his *rav*. "Rebbe," he said, "I don't understand this. If Hashem wanted me to have a heart attack, OK, it's far from comfortable, but I accept the decree. But why did it have to happen in the short time that my insurance was useless, so it cost me so much money?"

"What don't you understand?" the Rav said. "Rosh Hashanah is often called '*hayom*—the day' because it is *the* day—the day that is a year, in which the events of the entire year are decreed. Obviously, last Rosh Hashanah the *Beis Din shel Ma'alah* ruled that you would have to spend thirty thousand dollars on medical care this year. Had that decree been fulfilled here, in England, where you have insurance, imagine how many endless doctor visits and medical conditions, ailments, appointments, and treatments you would have had to endure until you racked up thirty thousand dollars in co-pays! Hashem spared you all that. He shipped you off to the US for a few days, got the entire decree fulfilled in a few short days in the hospital, and now it's over!"

"What a *chessed*!"

CONNECTION TO THE LEINING

Like Chanah, Sarah was a barren woman who was remembered on Rosh Hashanah. Also like Chanah, Sarah was teased by the woman she brought into the marriage to help bear children. Both Peninah and Hagar were punished for their cruelty, although Peninah had righteous intent and Hagar did not. The message of the great care with which we must handle another person's feelings is also important and relevant to Rosh Hashanah.

Second day:

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

The haftorah for the second day of Rosh Hashanah describes the coming of Mashiach and the glorious revelation of Hashem that will take place at that time. It speaks of Hashem accepting the *teshuvah* of *Klal Yisrael*, who is referred to many times as "Efraim" because the sins leading to the destruction and exile were driven by Yeravam ben Nevat and his *shevet*, Efraim. Hashem recalls His great love for us and redeems us, at long last.

The haftorah includes the well-known description of our mother Rochel crying for her children as they are led into exile. After rejecting the *tefillos*

of the other Avos and Imahos, Hashem accepts hers and promises to restore His children to the Holy Land.

CONNECTION TO ROSH HASHANAH

Hashem describes His intense love for Efraim and his "recollection" of him in *pesukim* in the haftorah that are said in *Zichronos* in *Mussaf*. The haftorah also describes the ultimate kingship and mastery of Hashem being recognized by the universe, a major theme of the day and *Malchuyos*. The prayer of Rochel and Hashem's acceptance of our *teshuvah* also emphasize the importance of repentance and return.

CONNECTION TO THE LEINING

Astoundingly, Rochel's prayer, which references her care not to embarrass her sister, is accepted over the merit of the *Akeidah*, which is described in the *leining*. The merit of all the Avos and Imahos together is a source of comfort and shelter for us on this great day of judgement.

THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY

NEW
SECTION!

Rosh Hashanah was a busy day! Aside from the creation of the animals and Adam Harishon, it was also the day of:



Akeidas Yitzchak (according to the *Zohar*)



Yaakov's receipt of the *brachos* from Yitzchak, "stealing" them from Eisav



Yosef's release from prison



The end of the slavery in Mitzrayim



The burning of cartloads of *sefarim* in Rome by the pope (1353)



The *yahrzeit* of Rav Amnon of Mainz, author of *U'nesaneh Tokef*; the Ridvaz, and the Malbim



HALACHAH

Rosh Hashanah Minhagim



SHEHECHEYANU

The Torah only mentions one day of Rosh Hashanah. We observe two because of difficulties establishing the correct day in the times of *kiddush hachodesh*, when *beis din* announced the start of a new month based on the sighting of the new moon. Some Rishonim hold that the two days must actually be one long 48-hour day because there is only one birthday of the world. The halachah is like the opinion of Rashi, that the second day is considered a separate day and therefore deserves its own *Shehecheyanu*. Nevertheless, one should have a new fruit or garment present on the second day when the candles are lit and Kiddush is recited so that the *Shehecheyanu* can refer to that, in deference to the other opinion.

The *Shehecheyanu* is triggered by just seeing the new fruit (that one intends to eat), and therefore it applies to it even at Kiddush or candle lighting. If using a fruit, it should be eaten at the *seudah*. Care must be taken not to eat that fruit on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, or it won't require a *Shehecheyanu* anymore on the second night!

There are differing opinions as to whether a woman says "Amen" to her husband's *Shehecheyanu* at Kiddush if she has already said it at candle lighting. Both *Shehecheyanus* are referring to the day; if she has said it already, she is not *yotzeh* with his, and it may be a *hefsek* to answer amen.

SIMANIM

It is customary to eat several foods that indicate through their name, taste, or other properties that we are going to have a good year. This is not superstition; it is a physical form of prayer, and it serves to make a positive decree real and extant in this world, and therefore irreversible. The fruits require a *bracha* because they are not normal parts of a meal and are not there to complement the bread. Care should be taken to recite the *brachos* in the proper order. Dates go before pomegranate; both go before apples. Some insist that there is a custom that the apple dipped in honey goes first, and in situations where there is a good reason to reverse the correct order, it is permitted to do so.

Bread takes priority over fruits of all types. One has to recite the *bracha* on the fruits anyway, even after *Hamotzi*, so one does not lose the *bracha* by washing for bread before eating the *simanim*. If one does eat the *simanim* before washing, they may be required to say a *Borei Nefashos* afterward. When reciting a *bracha*, most have the custom to say the *Yehi Ratzon* after taking a bite, in order to avoid a *hefsek* between the *bracha* and the eating. Some say it before the *bracha*. Others say it after the *bracha*, reasoning that it is not a *hefsek* because it is part of the eating process.

SHABBOS

Shabbos must be mentioned in the *bracha* on the day (*Attah vechartanu*) in *Shemoneh Esrei* and Kiddush. There are two references to Shabbos, at the beginning and end of the *bracha*. If one missed both of them, he must go back. If he did not finish the *bracha*, he may go back to its beginning, but if he finished the *bracha*, he must go back to the beginning of *Shemoneh Esrei* or Kiddush. If he forgot to add "*b'ahavah*" or switch "*Zikaron*" for "*Yom*," he does not have to repeat anything.

If someone forgot to mention Shabbos (or Rosh Hashanah) in only one of the two *brachos* of the day, it is questionable whether he should repeat anything, and therefore he should not. He can correct himself if he remembers within a second or two by just adding the reference to both together. On Friday night, "*Vayechulu*" and "*Magen Avos*" are said. The chazzan must remember to say "*haMelech haKadosh*." If he forgot, he does not go back.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

"THE DEFINITION OF 'A PIOUS PERSON' IS ONE WHO WANTS TO BE PIOUS. THE ONLY PERSON WHO DOESN'T 'WANT' TO BE PIOUS IS ONE WHO THINKS HE ALREADY IS."

—Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

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