



We Blow the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah to Sweeten the Force of Din by Renewing Creation with Midas HaRachamim from the Even Shesiyah

In honor of the New Year, Rosh HaShanah 5782, which approaches auspiciously, it behooves us to abide by the following teaching of Rabeinu HaKadosh in the Mishnah (Berachos 54a): **“נותן הודאה על שעבר וצועק על העתיד”**—**one should express gratitude for the past and shout** (pray fervently) **for the future** (protection). We will endeavor to explain why he chose the language **“shout for the future”** rather than pray or **“request for the future.”**

Let us suggest that he intended to teach us an important lesson. A person should not take for granted that just because HKB”H gave him something good in the past, he was necessarily deserving; and, hence, he deserves to receive the same good in the future. On the contrary, he should understand beyond a shadow of a doubt that everything he received was a total, pure gift bestowed with divine favor and mercy—midas hachesed and midas rachamim. This explains why Rabeinu HaKadosh employed the terminology **“shout for the future.”** One must shout and cry out his supplication to HKB”H, because he may not be worthy and deserving. This is the message of the passuk (Tehillim 34, 17): **“פני ה' בעושי רע להכרית מארץ זכרם, צעקו וה' שמע ומכל: צרותם הצילם”**—**the face of Hashem is against evildoers, to cut off their memory from earth. They cried out and Hashem heeds, and from all their troubles He rescues them.**

I learned this lesson from the sacred teachings of the Rambam (Hilchos Berachos 10, 26): **The general rule is: A person should always cry out** (to Hashem) **over future possibilities, asking for mercy. He should thank** (Hashem) **for what has transpired in the past, thanking Him and praising Him according to his capacity. Whoever praises and thanks Hashem abundantly and constantly is worthy of praise.** In other words, shouting and crying out to Hashem indicates that a person who may not be deserving in the eyes of midas hadin is requesting rachamim.

Now, if it is necessary to ask for rachamim for all future matters, all the more so is it necessary for matters pertaining to the wisdom of Torah. We must request divine mercy from HKB”H, **Who teaches Torah to His people, Yisrael.** Along these lines, we have learned in the Gemara (Niddah 70b), that the people of Alexandria asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya: **“מה יעשה אדם ויחכם, אמר להן ירבה בשיבה וימעט בסחורה. אמרו הרבה עשו כן ולא הועיל להם, אלא יבקשו רחמים ממי שהחכמה שלו, שנאמר כי ה' יתן חכמה מפיו דעת ותבונה.”** **What should a person do to become wise? He answered them: He should spend more time in a yeshivah and spend less time in business. They responded: But many have done so and yet this has not helped them. He said to them: They should plead for mercy from Him to whom wisdom (“chochmah”) belongs, as it states (Mishlei 2, 6): “For Hashem grants wisdom; from His mouth comes wisdom and understanding.”**

Therefore, I wish to express my deepest, sincere gratitude to Hashem publicly to enable me to produce another full year of weekly Torah essays on the parshiyos and the festivals. As always, they are based on the sacred pillars of the illuminating teachings of our holy sages—the Rishonim and Acharonim. Hence, we cry out for the future to be granted rachamim from Him to whom chochmah belongs to enlighten us with the wisdom of His Torah. May we merit and be privileged to provide these essays for our esteemed audience for many, good years to come with physical, emotional and spiritual health. May we all merit a **“kesivah va’chatimah tova”** and a year of redemption and salvation—swiftly, in our times! Amen.

In the Merit of the Blowing of the Shofar HKB”H Rises from the Throne of Din and Occupies the Throne of Rachamim

When dealing with issues pertaining to Rosh HaShanah—the day on which all of creation passes before HKB”H in judgment like sheep—it is impossible not to focus on the sacred mitzvah of blowing-shofar. In parshas Emor, it is written (Vayikra 23, 24): “בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם שַׁבְתּוֹן זִכְרוֹן תְּרוּעָה מִקְרָא קוֹדֵשׁ”—**in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, there shall be a rest day for you, a remembrance with shofar blasts, a holy convocation.** Similarly, in parshas Pinchas it is written (Bamidbar 29, 1): “וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ מִקְרָא קוֹדֵשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם”—**in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, there shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall do no laborious work, it shall be a day of shofar-blowing for you.**

The explanations concerning the deeper meaning of this mitzvah, the wonderful allusions, the tremendous benefits, and its mystical effects are endless. They abound in the words of Chazal, in the Gemara and the Midrash, in the Zohar hakadosh, in both our earlier and later commentaries, in the writings of the Arizal, and in the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov and his pupils, zy”a. Therefore, David HaMelech lavished his highest praise upon Yisrael for seeking and delving into the mystery underlying the blowing of the shofar (Tehillim 89, 16): “אֲשֶׁרִי”—**praised are the people who know the significance of the shofar-blast; Hashem, in the light of Your countenance they walk.**

The importance of the mitzvah of blowing shofar—inspiring fear and trembling in the heavens and on earth—is expressed beautifully in the stirring, poetic words of the divine Rabbi Amnon of Mainz in the sacred tefilah **U’Netaneh Tokef**, which we recite in the Mussaf service on Rosh HaShanah: “וּבְשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל יִתְקַע, וְקוֹל דְּמִמָּה דְקָה יִשְׁמַע, וּמִלֵּאכִים יִחַפְזוּן, וְחֵיל וְרַעְדָה יִאֲחֲזוּן, וַיֹּאמְרוּ הִנֵּה יוֹם הַדִּין, לִפְקוֹד עַל צַבָא מְרוֹם בְּדִין, כִּי לֹא יִזְכּוּ בְעֵינֵיךָ בְּדִין, וְכָל בְּאֵי עוֹלָם יַעֲבְרוּן לִפְנֵיךָ. כִּכְנֵי מְרוֹן.” **The great shofar will be sounded and a still, small voice will be heard. Angels will hasten, a trembling and terror will seize them, and they will say, “Behold, it is the Day of Judgment, to muster the heavenly host of judgment!”—for they cannot be vindicated in Your eyes in judgment. All mankind will pass before You like members of the flock.**

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing an insight from the “ruach hakodesh” of our blessed sages

regarding the incredible power and effect of the shofar. On Rosh HaShanah, HKB”H functions as the supreme King sitting atop His heavenly throne of judgment judging all of creation. In this capacity, He is referred to as “אלקים”—**Elokim**—the name associated with midas hadin. However, in the merit of the mitzvah of blowing-shofar, HKB”H rises, so to speak, from the throne of judgment and moves over to the throne of rachamim. Thus, He judges the world with divine mercy. As such, He is referred to as **Havaya**, the name of midas harachamim.

The Midrash depicts this phenomenon as follows (V.R. 29, 3):

Rabbi Yehudah the son of Rabbi Nachman opened with the following passuk (Tehillim 47, 6): “Elokim has ascended with the sound of ‘teruah’; Havaya with the sound of the shofar.” At first, HKB”H occupies His throne of justice, embodying the attribute of din; hence, the passuk initially employs the name “Elokim”—indicating justice. Yet, when Yisrael take their shofars in hand and blow, He vacates the throne of justice and moves over to the throne of mercy; hence, the passuk changes to the name Havaya—the name of mercy. Full of mercy, He treats them mercifully, transforming the attribute of justice into the attribute of mercy—during the seventh month.

At the Site of the Even Shesiyah His Impulse Was to Create the World with Midas HaDin

I had an intriguing idea in honor of Rosh HaShanah. I would like to present to our royal audience a novel explanation concerning the unique power and efficacy of the shofar. As mentioned, in the merit of blowing shofar, HKB”H rises from the throne of din and occupies the throne of rachamim. Let us introduce a fantastic concept the Yismach Moshe (Vayeitzei) brings down in the name of the sefer Kevod Chachamim on the “Aggados” in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Berachos 4, 22) related to the passuk (Tehillim 50, 2): “מִצִּיּוֹן מִכְּלָל יוֹפֵי אֱלֹקִים הוֹפִיעַ”—**out of Tziyon, consummation of beauty, Elokim appeared.** Why does David HaMelech associate the name of din—**Elokim**—with Tziyon?

To explain this association, he refers to the Mishnah (Yoma 52b). When the Kohen Gadol entered the Kodosh HaKodashim on Yom HaKippurim, he placed the ketores between the two staves of the Aron. Yet, another Mishnah (ibid. 53b) teaches us that in the second Beis HaMikdash, where there was no Aron: “אֶבֶן הֵיטָה שֵׁם מִיָּמוֹת נְבִיאִים רֵאשׁוֹנִים וְשֵׁתִיָּה הֵיטָה נִקְרָאת”—**a stone**

was there from the times of the early neviim; it was called “Shesiyah.” This is consistent with what the Rambam writes (Hilchos Beis HaBechirah 4, 1): **“אבן היתה בקודש הקדשים במערבו—שעליה היה הארון מונח—there was a stone in the western part of the Kodesh HaKodashim upon which the Aron rested.**

The Gemara (ibid. 54b) explains why it was called **“Even Shesiyah”**: **“שממנה הושתת העולם—because the world was founded from it.** This coincides very nicely with the opinion: **“מציון נברא העולם, דתניא רבי אליעזר אומר עולם מאמצעיתו נברא—the world was created from Tziyon. For, we have learned in a Baraisa: Rabbi Eliezer says: The world was created from its midpoint.** In other words, the creation of the world started from the site of the Even Shesiyah (the Foundation Stone) in the Kodesh HaKodashim, which is the center and midpoint of the world. The creation expanded from there to all four corners of the earth. They substantiate this fact with the passuk: **“מציון מכלל יופי אלקים—out of Tziyon, consummation of beauty, Elokim appeared,”** from it (Tziyon) **the beauty of the world was consummated.** In other words, the creation was initiated from the site of the Beis HaMikdash in Tziyon.

Now, we are all familiar with Rashi’s comment in the name of the Midrash (Bereishis 1, 1): The opening passuk of the Torah employs the name Elokim rather than Havaya; this indicates that the Creator initially intended to create the world based on the midah of “din.” He foresaw, however, that the world could not survive based on this strict standard. Therefore, he preferentially partnered the midah of “rachamim” with the midah of “din.” This partnership and preference for “midas harachamim” are evident in the passuk (ibid. 2, 4): **“כיום עשות ה’ אלקים ארץ ושמים.”** Note that in this passuk both divine names are employed, but the name of rachamim precedes the name of “din.”

With this in mind, the Kevod Chachamim proposes a tremendous chiddush. He says that HKB”H’s initial plan to create the world based on “midas hadin” was not abandoned completely. For, we have a fundamental principle (Yeshayah 40, 8): **“ודבר אלקינו יקום לעולם—”the word of our G-d (Elokim) shall stand forever.**

So, let us elaborate. When HKB”H created the world from the Even Shesiyah, His initial intent was to create it with “midas hadin”; thus, the tzaddikim would be worthy of exoneration even based on the strict standard of din. This divine intent remains in effect at the original point of creation—at the Even Shesiyah in the Kodesh HaKodashim. Afterwards, however, when

HKB”H expanded creation from there to the rest of the world, He recognized that creation could not endure based on the standard of “midas hadin”; the vast majority of people require “midas harachamim.” This prompted HKB”H to reconsider and partner the two midos together; however, “midas harachamim” was given priority.

This then is the message of the passuk: **“מציון מכלל יופי אלקים—”הופיע.** In the Beis HaMikdash, where the creation was initiated, the name of din, Elokim, is in force. Hence, the Torah opens with the words: **“בראשית ברא אלקים—”initially, the Almighty planned to create the world with “midas hadin”; at that site, His initial plan still exists.** This is also the message of the passuk (Tehillim 68, 36): **“נורא אלקים ממקדשיך—You are awesome, Elokim, from Your Mikdashim.** At the site of the Mikdash, the starting point of creation, the name **Elokim**, representing “midas hadin,” is dominant. This summarizes the words of the Kevod Chachamim.

Yaakov Avinu’s Astonishment: “Surely Hashem is in this place!”

In this manner, the Yismach Moshe goes on to explain the deeper meaning of the following pesukim in parshas Vayeitzei (Bereishis 28, 12): **“ויחלום והנה סולם מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה—”and he dreamt and behold! A ladder was set earthward, and its top reached heavenward.** They expound in the Midrash Shochar Tov (Tehillim 78) that the ladder in the dream represents the Beis HaMikdash. Now, seeing as “midas hadin” prevails at the site of the Mikdash, Yaakov saw in his vision: **“והנה מלאכי אלקים—”the messengers of Elokim, “midas hadin”—“עולים ויורדים בו—ascending and descending on it!** Furthermore, Yaakov perceived a tremendous chiddush. Despite the prevalence of the malachim of din: **“והנה ה’ נצב עליו—”HKB”H stood over him with the name Havaya, “midas harachamim,” to protect him.**

To convey this point, the Torah says (ibid. 16): **“וייקץ יעקב:—”Yaakov awoke from his sleep and proclaimed, “Surely Havaya is in this place!”** In other words, he was astonished that at the site of the Mikdash—the starting point of creation, where “midas hadin” prevails—the name of rachamim, **Havaya**, also shines bright. So, he exclaims: **“ואנכי לא ידעתי—”and I did not know!** I thought that only “midas hadin” exists and reigns here, in keeping with the passuk: **“נורא—”אלקים ממקדשיך.** Then, since he knew that that place was created with “midas hadin”: **“וירא ויאמר מה נורא המקום הזה אין זה כי אם בית—”**

אלקים—he became frightened and he said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of Elokim.”

In other words, he perceived the dominance of the name Elokim, “midas hadin,” in that place. Then Yaakov explains: **“זוה שער השמים—and this is the gate of heaven—**because here, in the place of the Mikdash, is the gate and starting point of creation, which was created with “midas hadin.” This is the gist of his sacred remarks.

However, the Yismach Moshe does not attempt to reconcile Yaakov’s astonishing realization. How, indeed, did he perceive the presence of **Havaya**, “midas harachamim,” at the site of the Mikdash? After all, at that site, the location of the Even Shesiyah, from where the world was founded and expanded, din prevails via the name **Elokim**.

Therefore, as a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to latch onto his coattails and complete his wonderful insight. We learn from the Tikunei Zohar that the reason HKB”H instructed Avraham to bind his son, Yitzchak, was to subjugate Yitzchak’s “midas hadin” to Avraham’s “midas hachessed.” As a result, “midas hadin” was also subjugated to “midas hachessed” in the heavens above.

Along these lines, the Rama of Pano writes in Asarah Ma’amaros: **Just as Yitzchak Avinu thought and consented wholeheartedly to be bound by Avraham at Minchah time on Yom HaKippurim; similarly, the heavenly “midas hadin” was bound joyfully and willingly by the midah of chesed . . . Mars was bound by Jupiter; Michael, the Kohen Gadol in the heavens, bound Gavriel.**

This helps us comprehend the following teaching in the Midrash (B.R. 56, 5): **“כל מה שהיה אבינו אברהם עוקד את יצחק בנו—מלמטון, היה הקב”ה כובש שריהם של עובדי כוכבים מלמעלן”—all the while our patriarch Avraham was binding his son Yitzchak down below, HKB”H was subjugating (binding) the ministering angels of the idolaters up above.** We express this fact in tefilas Shacharis daily: **“רבונו של עולם כמו שכבש אברהם אבינו את רחמינו לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם, כן יכבשו רחמיך את כעסך מעלינו ויגולו רחמיך על מדותיך, ותתנהג עמנו ה’ אלקינו במדת החסד ובמדת הרחמים.” Master of the Universe, just like Avraham Avinu suppressed his rachamim to carry out Your will wholeheartedly, so may Your rachamim suppress Your anger towards us and may Your mercy prevail over Your other midos. Deal with us Hashem, our G-d (Elokim), with “midas hachessed” and “midas harachamim.**

We can now understand how Yaakov Avinu reconciled the surprising discrepancy he perceived when he slept at the site of the future Mikdash. He was perplexed by the presence of the name **Havaya** at the site that was created with “midas hadin.” He then realized that this phenomenon is attributable to the merit of Akeidas Yitzchak, when din was subjugated to chesed.

This explains magnificently the passuk in the passage of Akeidas Yitzhak (ibid. 22, 14): **“ויקרא אברהם שם המקום ההוא ה’ יראה אשר—Avraham named that place “Havaya will see,” as it is said to this day: On the mountain, Havaya will be seen.** In keeping with our current discussion, we can suggest that Avraham prayed that HKB”H would also appear at the site of the Mikdash with the name of “midas harachamim,” **Havaya**.

Let us add a precious tidbit. How did Yaakov merit the appearance of HKB”H with the name **Havaya** at the site of the Mikdash? Let us refer to a fantastic chiddush in the teachings of the Chasam Sofer (Vayeira). Throughout the entire fourteen years that Yaakov studied Torah in the house of Eiver, he did not sleep at night recumbent; instead, he fell asleep sitting upright. When he came to Har HaMoriah, however, he lay down flat on the ground, because he wanted to lie down where Yitzchak had been bound. Hence, when he reclined at the site of the Akeidah, he was privileged to see **“Havaya standing over him”** in the merit of the Akeidah.

Every Rosh HaShanah the Creation Is Renewed from the Site of the Even Shesiyah

In this manner, we will proceed to explain the passage in the Midrash we opened with. On Rosh HaShanah, HKB”H initially occupies the throne of din but moves over to the throne of rachamim when Yisrael take their shofars in hand and sound them. It appears that we can propose a novel explanation that can be corroborated. On every Rosh HaShanah, HKB”H renews the creation of the world. Therefore, just as He originally initiated the creation from the Even Shesiyah in the Kodesh HaKodashim; similarly, HKB”H renews the creation annually on Rosh HaShanah from the exact same location.

We learned from the Kevod Chachamim that the initial spot of creation at the Even Shesiyah was created with “midas hadin,” because HKB”H’s original intent was fulfilled there. Therefore, in similar fashion, HKB”H initially sits on the throne of din to judge the world on Rosh HaShanah. However, when Yisrael

below. Let us introduce a wonderful idea from the incredible teachings of the Sefas Emes (Shabbas Teshuvah 5662). He asserts that the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah—the ten days of repentance extending from Rosh HaShanah to Yom HaKippurim—correspond to the ten utterances with which the world was created. As we have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 5, 1):

”בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם, ומה תלמוד לומר, והלא במאמר אחד יכול להיבראות, אלא להיפרע מן הרשעים שמאבדין את העולם שנברא בעשרה מאמרות, וליתן שכר טוב לצדיקים שמקיימין את העולם שנברא בעשרה מאמרות.”

The world was created by means of “ten utterances.” What does this come to teach us? Indeed, it could have been created with a single utterance; but this way allows for retribution from the wicked—who destroy the world that was created with ten utterances—and the bestowal of ample reward to the righteous—who sustain the world that was created with ten utterances.

With this in mind, the Sefas Emes asserts that on every Rosh HaShanah HKB”H renews creation with the ten utterances just as He did at the initial creation of the world. Thus, the tzaddikim, who sustain the world with their study of Torah and performance of mitzvos, are active participants in the renewal of creation with the ten utterances. The reshaim, however,

whose evil deeds and transgressions corrupt and destroy the world that was created with the ten utterances, destroy the conduits that provide blessings and abundant good and are incapable of participating in the renewal of creation.

For this reason, HKB”H, in His infinite mercy and kindness, gave us the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah. During the ten days from Rosh HaShanah to Yom HaKippurim, every Jew is able to rectify via teshuvah and good deeds the damage he caused to the ten utterances. In this manner, we will merit being numbered among the tzaddikim who renew creation annually with the ten utterances and will merit receiving abundant good from the conduits generated by the ten utterances.

As explained, annually, on Rosh HaShanah, HKB”H renews the creation from the site of the Even Shesiyah, which was created with “midas hadin.” As a result of the blowing of the shofar, HKB”H recalls Akeidas Yitzchak and moves from the throne of din to the throne of rachamim. Therefore, in His infinite mercy and kindness, He granted us the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah to rectify the damage caused to the ten utterances. Then, on Yom HaKippurim, after this tikun has been completed, the Kohen Gadol enters the Kodesh HaKodashim to burn the ketores at the site of the Even Shesiyah.



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