



## “Inscribe us in the Book of Life”

# We Pray for HKB”H to Transform the Permutations of “Din” into “Rachamim” so that We Will Be Inscribed in the Book of Life

In honor of the auspiciously approaching New Year, Rosh HaShanah 5783, we will focus on the tefilah we submit to HKB”H over and over again throughout the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur—to inscribe us “b’sefer hachayim,” in the Book of Life.

The request to be inscribed in the Sefer HaChayim is a central theme throughout the tefilos of the Yamim Nora’im and the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah—the Ten Days of Repentance. We utter it in the first berachah of our silent Amidah: **“זְכַרְנוּ לְחַיִּים, מֶלֶךְ חַפְצֵי”** **“remember us for life, O King Who desires life, and inscribe us in the Book of Life, for Your sake, O G-d of life.** Again, towards the end of the silent Amidah, in the berachah expressing our gratitude, we pray: **“וְכַתְּבוּ לְחַיִּים—”** **and inscribe all the children of Your covenant for a good life.** Also, in the berachah of Sim Shalom, we say: **“בְּסֵפֶר חַיִּים, בְּרַחֲמֵי וְשָׁלוֹם, וּפְרִיָּסָה טוֹבָה, וּגְזֵרוֹת טוֹבוֹת, יְשׁוּעוֹת וְנַחֲמוֹת, וְנִזְכָּר וְנִכְתָּב לְפָנֶיךָ, אֲנַחְנוּ וְכָל עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וְשָׁלוֹם”—** **in the book of life, blessing, peace, good, prosperity, good decrees, salvations and consolations, may we and all Your people, the house of Yisrael be remembered and inscribed before You, , for a good life and for peace.**

The rationale for this practice is found in the Gemara (R.H. 16b): **“שְׁלֹשָׁה סְפָרִים נִפְתָּחִים בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה, אֶחָד שֶׁל רְשָׁעִים גְּמוּרִין, וְאֶחָד שֶׁל צְדִיקִים גְּמוּרִין, וְאֶחָד שֶׁל בֵּינוּנִים, צְדִיקִים גְּמוּרִין, וְאֶחָד שֶׁל בֵּינוּנִים תְּלוּיִין וְעוֹמְדִין מֵרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה לְאַחֶרֶת לְחַיִּים, וְעַד יוֹם הַכְּפוּרִים, זָכוּ נִכְתָּבִין לְחַיִּים, לֹא זָכוּ נִכְתָּבִין לְמוֹתָהּ.”** **Three books are opened on Rosh HaShanah—one for the completely wicked (reshaim), one for the completely righteous (tzaddikim), and one for the intermediate people (beinonim). The completely righteous are written and sealed immediately**

**for life; the completely wicked are written and sealed immediately for death; the intermediate people are held in abeyance from Rosh HaShanah until Yom Kippur—if they merit it, they are inscribed for life, if they do not merit it, they are inscribed for death.**

Why is it necessary for HKB”H to inscribe people’s fates in these books? Undoubtedly, He can decree whatever He so desires at any time without resorting to writing it down in these books. Additionally, what is the nature and significance of this inscription? Does HKB”H have a book in the heavens with pages of parchment which is written in with pen and ink?

### Noach Prayed to Be Remembered on Rosh HaShanah: “And Noach, also, You remembered with love”

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by noting a fascinating inclusion in our Mussaf service on Rosh HaShanah. Among the ten pesukim we utter in Zichronos, we mention the fact that HKB”H remembered Noach in a positive light:

**“וְגַם אֶת נֹחַ בְּאֵהָבָה זָכַרְתָּ, וַתִּקְדָּהוּ בְּדָבָר יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים בְּהִבְיָאָה אֶת מִי הַמַּבּוּל לְשַׁחַת כָּל בָּשָׂר מִפְּנֵי רַע מַעַלְלֵיהֶם, עַל כֵּן זָכְרוּנוּ בָּא לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְהַרְבּוֹת זְרַעוֹ כַּעֲפָרוֹת תֵּבֵל וְצִאֲצָאִיו כְּחוֹל הַיָּם, כְּכַתּוּב בַּתּוֹרָתְךָ וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת נֹחַ וְאֵת כָּל חַיְיָהּ וְאֵת כָּל הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתֵּבָה, וַיַּעֲבֵר אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ עַל הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשְׂכַּחוּ הַמַּיִם.”**

**And Noach, also, You remembered with love, and You came to him with words of salvation and compassion, when you brought the waters of the flood to destroy all living flesh, because of the evil of their deeds. And so let his memory come to You, Hashem our G-d, that You multiply his children like the dust of the earth, his descendants like sand of the sea, as it is written in Your Torah (Bereishis 8,**

1): **“Elokim remembered Noah and all the animals, and all the cattle that were with him in the ark, and Elokim made a wind blow across the earth, and the waters grew calm.”**

Now, we find an intriguing teaching from Chazal concerning Noah. During the entire year that Noah was confined to the teivah, he prayed to HKB”H to release him and his family from that confinement. He included in his tefilah a request that he be mentioned by tzaddikim in their prayers on Rosh Hashanah. Here is the pertinent Midrash (B.R. 34, 1) related to the passuk (ibid. 8, 16):

“וידבר אלקים אל נח לאמר צא מן התיבה. הוציאה ממסגר נפשי להודות את שמך, כי יכתירו צדיקים כי תגמול עלי. הוציאה ממסגר נפשי, זה נח שהיה סגור בתיבה י”ב חודש. להודות את שמך, לתת הודיה לשמך. כי יכתירו צדיקים, יתכללון בי צדיקיא. כי תגמול עלי, שגמלת עלי ואמרת לי צא מן התיבה.”

**And G-d spoke to Noah, saying: “Exit the ark.”** It is written (Tehillim 142, 8): **“Bring my soul out of confinement, that I may give thanks unto Your name; the righteous will crown me; for You will deal generously with me.”** **“Bring my soul out of prison”** refers to Noah, who was confined to the teivah for twelve months; **“that I may give thanks to Your name”**—to express gratitude to Your name (for releasing me from this prison). **“The righteous will crown me”**—tzaddikim will join me. **“For You will deal generously with me”**—You did deal generously with me and said to me, **“Exit the ark.”**

The commentaries struggle to make sense of Noah’s supplication: **“The righteous will crown me”**—tzaddikim will join me. In his commentary on the Midrash, Rashi explains his meaning as follows: **In the miracles He performed on my behalf, the tzaddikim will acknowledge and crown You. They will adorn you with a crown of praise that they will institute in their prayers: “And Noah, also, You remembered with love.”**

Why, indeed, does Noah deserve to be remembered and mentioned in our tefilos on one of the holiest days of the year, on Rosh HaShanah? This question is magnified by the fact that we learn in the Mishnah (Nedarim 31a): **“קונם שאיני נהנה לבני נח, מותר; בישראל ואסור בעובדי כוכבים”**—if a person says: **“I vow not to derive any benefit from the descendants of Noah,” he is permitted to Yisrael but is prohibited from idol-worshippers.** The Gemara (ibid.) asks: **“וישראל מי נפיק מכלל בני נח”**—and are Jews excluded from the general category of the descendants

of Noah? The Gemara answers: **על איתקרו על שמייה—once Avraham was endowed with kedushah, they are referred to by his name** and not by Noah’s. Thus, we can only wonder, for what reason do we mention Noah in the ten pesukim of Zichronos: **“וזגם את נח באהבה זכרת”**? Additionally, why was it so important to Noah that future tzaddikim would mention him in their tefilos on Rosh HaShanah?

### Noah Was the First Tzaddik to Transform Midas HaDin into Midas HaRachamim

I would like to propose a wonderful explanation. We find a tremendous chiddush concerning Noah; he was the first tzaddik who transformed “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim” via his tefilah. Albeit the Zohar hakadosh (Noach 67b) contends that Noah demonstrated a major character flaw—he neglected to pray to save the people of his generation from extermination. Clearly, this is in stark contrast to Moshe Rabeinu, who prayed to spare Yisrael from extermination in the aftermath of the “cheit ha’eigel.” It is for this reason that the “mabul” is associated with the name of Noah (Yeshayah 54, 9): **“כי מי נח זאת לי”**—for the waters of Noah shall this be to Me. After being confined in the “teivah,” however, he realized the error of his ways. This realization prompted him to pray to HKB”H, and he succeeded in transforming “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim,” as it is written (Bereishis 8, 1):

“ויזכור אלקים את נח ואת כל החיה ואת כל הבהמה אשר אתו בתיבה, ויעבר אלקים רוח על הארץ וישוכו המים”

**and Elokim remembered Noah and all the animals that were with him in the ark, and G-d caused a spirit to pass over the earth and the water subsided.** Rashi comments: **This name (Elokim) connotes the attribute of “din”; and it was transformed into the attribute of “rachamim” through the prayer of the tzaddikim; while the wickedness of the reshaim (wicked) transforms the attribute of “rachamim” into the attribute of “din.” . . . This name (Havaya) connotes the attribute of “rachamim.”**

We learn from Rashi’s comment that two diametrically opposed extremes existed in the generation of the “mabul.” Initially, due to their corrupt ways, the people of that generation aroused the attribute of “din” emanating from the name **Elokim**. Ultimately, as their corruption continued and intensified, they even transformed the attribute of “rachamim,” emanating from the name **Havaya**, into “din.” This situation persisted until

Noach began to pray inside the “teivah.” Not only was he able to invoke the attribute of “rachamim” associated with the name **Havaya**, but he also succeeded in transforming the attribute of “din” associated with the name **Elokim** into “rachamim”—as reflected by the passuk: “ויזכור אלקים את נח”—**Elokim remembered Noach.**

Let us expand on Rashi’s comment. He specifically says: **And it was transformed into the attribute of “rachamim” through the tefilah of the tzaddikim.** Note that he does not say “through the tefilah of Noach.” He is referring to what they expounded in the Gemara (Succah 14a) on the passuk (ibid. 25, 21): “ויעתר יצחק לה’ לנוכח אשתו כי עקרה היא ויעתר לו ה’, למה נמשלה ויעתר יצחק לה’ לנוכח אשתו כי עקרה היא ויעתר לו ה’, למה נמשלה תפלתן של צדיקים כעתר, מה עתר זה מהפך את התבואה בגורן ממקום למקום, אף תפלתם של צדיקים מהפכת דעתו של הקב”ה ממדת אכזריות למדת הרחמים.” In this passuk, Yitzchak’s prayers to Hashem are compared to a pitchfork; just as a pitchfork turns over the grain and moves it from place to place, so, too, the prayers of tzaddikim change HKB”H’s mindset from harsh judgment to mercy.

Thus, we can conclude from Rashi’s choice of terminology that this is what he is teaching us. By means of his tefilah, Noach succeeded in transforming “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim.” For, his tefilos had the effect of “the tefilah of the tzaddikim,” which overturn the attribute of “din” and transform it into the attribute of “rachamim.” By the way, from Rashi’s comment, we learn a new interpretation of the Gemara’s statement. It states that the prayers of tzaddikim **“transform HKB”H’s mindset from the attribute of “harsh judgment” to the attribute of “mercy.”** Simply understood, we would explain that their prayers effect a change, as it were, in the way HKB”H manages the world; rather than ruling with “din,” He rules with “rachamim.”

Based on this comment of Rashi’s, however, we see that the tefilos of tzaddikim do more than that; they actually transform the “din” itself, so that it coincides with the management based on “midas harachamim.” Thus, the use of the terminology portraying upheaval and transformation-- “מהפכת דעתו”—is accurate and justified. A radical upheaval occurs transforming the actual “din” into “rachamim.” This is illustrated by the passuk regarding Noach: **“Elokim (G-d acting in accordance with the attribute of “din”) remembered Noach.”** It was Elokim specifically that acted mercifully. We find a similar instance regarding Rachel Imeinu: “ויזכור אלקים את רחל”—**Elokim remembered Rachel.**

We can apply this idea to suggest a very nice interpretation of the proclamation of Yisrael’s sweet psalmist, David HaMelech (Tehillim 69, 14): “ואני תפילתי לך ה’ עת רצון”—**but as for me, my prayer is to You, Havaya, at an opportune time.** In other words, I pray to elicit an opportune moment emanating from the name of “rachamim,” **Havaya.** But that is not enough for me; my aim is to also transform the “din” associated with the name **Elokim** into mercy, “rachamim.” Thus: **“אלקים ברב חסדך ענני באמת –Elokim, in the abundance of Your kindness, answer me with the truth of Your salvation—the name Elokim itself, representing “din,” will answer me favorably, demonstrating His abundant kindness.**

### The Mitzvah of Blowing Shofar Is Designed to Transform Midas HaDin into Midas HaRachamim

Following this enlightening path, we will now explain why our blessed sages instituted that we mention on Rosh HaShanah the passuk: “ויזכור אלקים את נח”—**and Elokim remembered Noach.** We will also endeavor to explain why it was crucial to Noach to be mentioned by future tzaddikim in their tefilos. As we know, on Rosh HaShanah, HKB”H sits on the throne of judgment, and all creatures pass before Him like sheep to be judged for better or for worse. In His infinite mercy and kindness, HKB”H gave us the mitzvah of shofar, as it is written (Bamidbar 29, 1): “יום תרועה יהיה לכם”—**it shall be a day of shofar-blowing for you.** This unique mitzvah is designed to transform “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim.” As they expounded in the Midrash (V.R. 29, 3):

“יהודה ברבי נחמן פתח, (תהלים מז-ו) עלה אלקים בתרועה ה’ בקול שופר, בשעה שהקב”ה יושב ועולה על כסא דין בדין הוא עולה, מאי טעם, עלה אלקים בתרועה [אלקים הוא מדת הדין], ובשעה שישראל נוטלין את שופריהן ותוקעין לפני הקב”ה, עומד מכסא הדין ויושב בכסא רחמים, דכתיב ה’ בקול שופר [ה’ הוא מדת הרחמים], ומתמלא עליהם רחמים ומרחם עליהם, והופך עליהם מדת הדין לרחמים, אימתי, בחודש השביעי.”

Initially HKB”H occupies the throne of “din” with the intent of judging strictly; but when Yisrael take their shofars and sound them in the presence of HKB”H, He vacates the throne of “din” and occupies the throne of “rachamim.” When does this occur? In the seventh month.

The Bnei Yissaschar (Tishrei 3, 1) addresses the redundant language found at the end of the Midrash: **“ומתמלא עליהם רחמים”** ומרחם עליהם, והופך עליהם מדת הדין לרחמים” Two separate issues are mentioned here: (1) HKB”H stands up, so to speak, vacating the



**the Torah and create the world.** In other words, HKB”H, the artist who created the world, so to speak, used the letters of the Torah as his blueprint. He utilized various permutations of the letters of the Torah to create the world and to sustain all of His creations.

Accordingly, the holy Ba’al Shem Tov explains that nothing bad or negative emanates from the blessed Almighty. All of the influence that descends from above is in the form of favorable and merciful permutations of letters. However, as they descend downwards, they are transformed according to the spiritual level and merit of the recipients. If the recipients are worthy, because they serve Hashem loyally and observe His Torah, the arrangement of letters remains intact, just as they were issued from above in the heavens; they provide absolute “chesed.”

If, however, the recipients are now worthy of receiving good, positive influence, due to their bad, wrongful deeds, then, chas v’shalom, the permutation of letters changes from good to bad. For instance, instead of עני”ג—connoting delight and pleasure—is its anagram נג”ע—connoting affliction—is formed. Instead of ת”ם—connoting something pure, innocent, or wholesome—is its anagram מ”ת—connoting death—is formed, chas v’shalom. Yet, if there is a tzaddik capable of praying on behalf of his generation, he is capable of restoring the permutation of letters to the permutation portending and providing “chesed” and “rachamim,” as they were issued from above.

### **“Make a צה”ר for the teivah” Transforming the Letters of צה”ה to the Permutation רצ”ה**

Based on this understanding, it appears that we can paint Noach in a positive light, in keeping with our sages who find him praiseworthy. We can propose that the reason Noach refrained from praying on behalf of the people of his generation to save them from the mabul was because he was initially perplexed by the quandary of the Ramban. In other words, since a change of will does not apply to HKB”H, he saw no point in praying to HKB”H to change His mind to not subject the world to the mabul.

Taking the high road, we will endeavor to explain what caused Noach to change his mind—why he decided to pray to HKB”H while in the “teivah.” When giving Noach instructions pertaining to the construction of the “teivah,” He says (Bereishis 6, 16): **“צַהֲרָה תַעֲשֶׂה לְתִיבָה”**—**make a window (skylight) for the**

**ark.** The passuk employs the term **“tzohar”** spelled צה”ר. The Toldos Yaakov Yosef explains the allusion in the passuk as follows: There are three permutations of the word צה”ה--צה”ר רצ”ה. The word רצ”ה suggests trouble and distress. The word רצ”ה is related to goodwill--in our case, specifically divine goodwill. With the command: **“make a צה”ר for the teivah,”** HKB”H was instructing Noach to transform the word צה”ה to the permutation רצ”ה. Thus, the **“tzohar”** would mitigate the forces of “din” at their roots. This coincides with Chazal’s statement that tzaddikim possess the power to overturn “midas hadin” and transform it into “midas harachamim.”

Thus, we learn that by instructing Noach to build the “teivah” with the command: **“Make a צה”ר for the teivah”**—HKB”H revealed to Noach that he possessed the power to transform “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim.” Hence, Noach understood that it was his duty to pray (in the “teivah”) on behalf of himself and the generations to follow him to transform “midas hadin” into “midas harachamim.” HKB”H accepted his tefilah, as is evident from the passuk: **“Elokim remembered Noach.”** Recall that Rashi learned from this passuk that in the merit of Noach’s entreaty, the name Elokim itself, the name of “din,” was transformed into “rachamim.”

In this manner, we can explain magnificently the matter of the three books of judgment—the book of the tzaddikim, the book of the reshaim, and the book of those in-between. In the Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (186), he writes that ישראל is an acronym for יש שישים ריבוא אותיות לתורה—**there are 600,000 letters in the Torah.** This implies that every single Jew is associated with one letter of the Torah. This helps us understand what the Degel Machaneh Ephraim writes in parshas Ki Sisa:

**Every Jew has roots and a letter in the Torah, in keeping with the concept that the Torah, HKB”H and Yisrael are a single entity. So, when one Jew sins, chas v’shalom, he causes a blemish in the letter in the Torah that he is associated with and obscures its light. When he returns via teshuvah, he returns to his original status, illuminating the light of Torah anew.**

The Ma’or Einayim (Emor) writes that on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, every Jew must rectify his letter in the Torah that was damaged, chas v’shalom, as a result of iniquities: **כי כל חלקי נשמות ישראל הן מושרשין בתורה כנודע שכל אחד יש לו אות בתורה,**

ובהתרחקו מן הבורא ברוך הוא נפסק חלקו משורש התורה, ועל ידי תיקון ראש השנה ויום הכיפורים שב החלק של כל אחד מישראל אל התורה. **All partial Jewish neshamos are rooted in the Torah. For, as it is known, everyone has his own letter in the Torah. If he strays away from the blessed Creator, his portion from the root of his neshamah is interrupted. By means of the tikun of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, the portion of every single Jew is restored in the Torah.**

So, based on what we have learned, we can propose that in the book of the reshaim, HKB”H arranges the letters of those reshaim in negative permutations that serve to punish them, such as **מ”ת** or **צ”ה**. In other words, in the book of the reshaim, all the permutations have a negative connotation.

In contrast, in the book of the tzaddikim, HKB”H accumulates all of the letters related to the tzaddikim who rectified them and forms positive permutations that portend good tidings. For example, the name associated with making a livelihood is **ח”ך**. It is derived from the last letters of the words (Tehillim 145, 16): **”פּוֹתֵחַ אֵת יַדְךָ”**. The name associated with “refuah”—healing—is **י”י**, which is derived from the first letters of the words (ibid. 23, 6): **”יְיָ לְאֹרֶךְ יָמִים”**. This is the implication of David HaMelech’s request (ibid. 86, 17): **”עֲשֵׂה עִמִּי אוֹת לְטוֹבָה”**—**display for me a sign** (this can also be translated as **“a letter”**) **for good**. He requested that HKB”H arrange the letter associated with him in a positive, good permutation with letters of other tzaddikim portending everything positive and good.

With this understanding, we can better appreciate the following teaching in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 72a): **”פִּזְזוּר לְרָשָׁעִים—dispersion for the wicked is beneficial to them and beneficial to the world, whereas it is bad for tzaddikim and bad for the world.** For, when reshaim are dispersed and separated from one another, the permutations of their corresponding letters, which portend bad, undesirable things, are also separated and dispersed. The exact opposite holds true for tzaddikim. The gathering of tzaddikim is beneficial to them and to the world, because through them, permutations of letters that portend good things and good decrees are generated.

We have now explained the significance of the formula we recite in our tefilos during the Yamim Nora’im: **”זְכֵרְנוּ לְחַיִּים, מְלֶךְ”** **”חַפְצֵי בְחַיִּים, וְכַתְּבֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים, לְמַעַנְךָ אֱלֹקִים חַיִּים”**. This expresses our desire to be inscribed in the Book of Life. At this time of year, HKB”H inscribes in the book of the tzaddikim all of the letters associated with those Jews who have performed teshuvah. He arranges them to form all of the permutations from all the sacred names that portend a good life, an ample livelihood, good health, and salvation. Hence, at the conclusion of the Amidah, we pray: **”In the book of life, blessing, peace, good, prosperity, good decrees, salvations and consolations, may we and all Your people, the house of Yisrael be remembered and inscribed before You, , for a good life and for peace.”**

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their dear mother  
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Arthur & Randi Luxenberg לזכות  
of their wonderful parents, children and grandchildren  
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