

# NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM  
THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה  
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

## PEARLS OF WISDOM

In the physical world there are different tools for different purposes. Each tool has its own special function. It is the same in the spiritual world. A hammer does a certain job that a screwdriver is unsuited for, and vice versa.

A workman needs to understand the function of each tool. He needs to know what it can and cannot do. It is the same in spiritual *avodah*. For instance, strings are suited to serve as a reminder. Someone who wants to keep a certain task in mind, so he doesn't forget to do it, will naturally tie a string on his finger as a reminder. Spiritually, the strings of the *tzitzis* remind us of the *Kisei Hakavod* [due to the color of the *techeles*] and of all the *mitzvos*.

Straps are naturally suited to tie things together. Spiritually, they tie our *emunah* in *Hashem* to our hearts and minds, so it won't depart us. Thus *Halachah* dictates that we may not take our minds off *tefillin* when we are wearing them. This is because the whole purpose of *tefillin* is for the *kedushah* to be permanently tied to our hearts and minds. Similarly, the *sukkah* shelters, and the *lulav* arouses.

What about *shofar*?

*Shofar*, too, is suited to a special purpose, and we need to know what it is.

A *shofar* is to break something. The *Gemara* speaks of a rooster that sticks its head into a glass

## A Shofar is to Break

כתיבה וחתימה טובה



vessel and is *tokea* inside it, thus breaking the vessel. *Tokea* is the sound that a *shofar* makes.

When an army goes out to battle, they sound the *shofar*. This is to strike fear into the heart of the enemy, to “break” them.

Whenever there is something closed up and hidden away from us, and we want to break through in order to bring it out, the *shofar* is employed to smash through and thus reveal the hidden object.

The first time we find the *shofar* mentioned in the Torah is at *Matan Torah*. The Torah was *Hashem's* precious hidden treasure for two thousand years before the world was even created. When He wished to give the Torah to the Jewish people, and bring it down to earth, it says וקול השופר חזק מאד – “The sound of the *shofar* was very strong.” This was to break through the strong heavenly “safe” in which the Torah was stored, and bring it out.

The same will be in the future to come. There is a day about which it says יום נקם בלבי – “A day of retribution is in My heart” (*Yeshayahu* 63). About this day, *Chazal* say, “I revealed it to My heart, but not to My limbs and organs. The heart did not reveal it to the mouth.”<sup>1</sup>

When this day arrives, all the blessings and consolations that were hidden from sight during the two thousand years of *galus* will come out, as it says, שִׂמְחָנוּ כִּימוֹת עֲנִיתָנוּ שָׁנוֹת רָאיֵנוּ רָעָה – “Bring us joy like the days You oppressed us, like the years we saw evil.”

How will these hidden treasures be opened up? What will break through to them?

וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר גָּדוֹל – “On that day, a great *shofar* will be sounded.” ●

<sup>1</sup> *Sanhedrin* 99.

## SPECIAL TOPIC

## Your Glorious Kingdom

### OUR PRAYERS INCREASE HEAVEN'S GLORY

#### Pray for the Public

During *Yamim Nora'im*, the Jewish people ascend to a higher level. This jump in *madreigah* is a gift from Heaven. People pray with more *kavanah*, they learn more Torah, everyone is concerned about his future during these days.

Early Torah sources teach us that when an individual prays it should be not only for himself, but for all the Jewish people. A person should pray

for the sake of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and that the *Shechinah's* exile should come to an end. Someone who prays on Rosh Hashanah for his own needs is compared to a dog who woofs “*Hav hav!*” (“give give”).<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that praying with this lofty *kavanah* is a very high level to achieve. Nevertheless, we need to gain a little understanding of and feeling for it.

<sup>1</sup> *Tikunei Zohar* 6, 22a.

#### לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמָה

מוֹחַ"ד מִשֶּׁה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְּבוֹרָגָה זצ"ל

וּמוֹחַ"ד בְּרוֹךְ זֶאֱבִי בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְדָאוֹס זצ"ל

נִדְבַת נִדְבֵיהֶם ~ עֲטַת זְקִינִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְהַפָּאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם

## The Role of Torah Learners

The following allegory illustrates the role of Torah learners in the period of *Yamim Nora'im*.

There was once a great and enormously rich king who built up vast provinces and erected many elegant palaces. When he was asked what he is doing all this for, the king answered: "I have an only son who is more precious to me than anything. Everything I am doing is for him. As for myself, I don't need anything."

The king himself was on a level that was high above all this material pomp and grandeur. But for his only son, he built and acted without end.

When the king's child grew a little older, the king brought in the best educators to teach him wisdom and proper behavior. However, the child did not want to learn or to behave as expected of him. He did not want to honor the king and his ministers. And it is written:

מֶלֶךְ בְּמִשְׁפָּט יַעֲמִיד אָרֶץ – The king establishes the earth through judgment.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the king, who was aware of the situation, said to his son, "You should know that everything I did is for you. If you behave properly, you will have a very good life. But if you stray from the proper way, then I will have nothing to do with you."

The son repented of his wayward behavior, but later fell back into it. At that point the king had no choice. He banished his son from home and sent him away penniless.

The king's son went around and did not know anyone he met, because until then he knew only the king's home. He walked out into the wilderness, lost his way, and fell into a pit, breaking his bones. He was lying there in the pit, utterly shattered. He had nothing to eat and nothing to drink. He surely had no one there to give him medical treatment. He just lied in the pit and cried out.

The king knew the consequences of his decision.

On the one hand, a king must act with judgment, so he didn't run to save the boy, but on the other hand, the boy's life was in danger.

So the king did two things. First, he sent a pair of ministers carrying food and medical supplies to go look for the boy and see how he was faring. Second, he burned down all the palaces he had built, destroyed everything, and went to wander around in deserted areas, barefoot and in great discomfort, since his son is suffering, and at the present time he anyway had no interest in any material matter.

The ministers, who went to look for the son, heard screaming emanating from somewhere. They saw the son inside the pit, his bones broken. What should they do? They didn't have a ladder to get down into the pit, and if they jump in, they will break their bones, too. Yet, they cannot disobey the king's command! Thus, they entered the pit as best they could, and indeed broke their bones, but nevertheless they were in better condition than the king's son.

They began giving food to the son, they gave him some water to drink, and splinted his broken bones, but the boy's condition showed no noticeable improvement. They had arrived almost too late. The boy had been in the pit for a long time and was barely alive. And the ministers too were stuck inside the pit, all battered up and with broken bones.

As for the king, he was wandering through deserted areas in great discomfort. The ministers knew that the king would eventually pass by this pit. His route would bring him this way once a year. The ministers knew that if they will cry out, the king will hear their screams. He will look what is happening in the pit, and will save his son and them.

The day arrived that the ministers knew the king would pass by the pit. They were starving and in deteriorated condition, on the verge of death. One minister said to the other, "Yell out so the king will hear." He answered, "I don't have the strength. I know for sure that the king will pass by the edge of the pit only today, and I am worried over my future..."

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<sup>2</sup> Mishlei 29:4.

but what can I do? I have no strength left to scream out.”

The first minister had a little more strength, so he yelled out, “O King, HELP!!!”

The king heard the cries. In fact, he expected to hear this. Right away he asked the minister what he needs. The minister begged for a little food, and the king said to him, “That’s what you want?! What else can I give you?”

The minister says, “Send a doctor to heal my wounds.”

The king asks, “And what else?”

“My children at home have nothing to live on. Please send them a little food.”

It did not even occur to him to ask for the most obvious thing of all: to get them out of the pit!

So the king, in his kindness, fulfilled the minister’s request for an entire year. The next year, the king again followed the same route, and the ministers once again will have the opportunity to make requests from the king. The question is: what will they ask for this time?

That is the allegory.

I am sure you already got the point of the story, but I will elaborate a little on the details.

The “king” is of course *Hashem*, Who created a world full of millions of creatures, animal, vegetable and mineral. Each creature has its own special qualities. Also inanimate things have special attributes. *Hashem* rules absolutely over all. Creation has tremendous areas that we have no idea about.

*Hashem* created for the Jewish people this whole tremendous creation, with everything in it. All the worlds and all the creatures. So it was until the day came when the Jewish people started to sin, started to behave improperly. *Hashem* then sent the Jewish people into the pit. *Klal Yisrael* went into *galus*. There, the Jewish people’s bones get broken, there are so many troubles and difficulties.

And the King himself, *Hashem*, burnt down the palace. He destroyed *Beis Hamikdash*. The *Shechinah*

went into *galus*. *Hashem* then sent “ministers” to revive the king’s son. When *Moshe Rabbeinu* was on Mount Sinai, *Hashem* told him לך רד – “Go down”<sup>3</sup> to save the Jewish people, and it is known that the *talmidei chachamim* of every generation represent the aspect of *Moshe Rabbeinu* in their generation.

*Hashem* sent the *talmidei chachamim* into the pit, into *galus*, in order to save the King’s son, which is *Klal Yisrael*. The *talmidei chachamim* thus entered *galus* and they, too, got battered up. They try to slowly revive the Jewish people, who are in bad shape: they don’t know what *Shabbos* is, they don’t know what *kashrus* is, they don’t know what *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is. The King’s son, *Klal Yisrael*, doesn’t cry out “*Sh’ma koleinu*.” He doesn’t scream “*Hashiveinu*.” He is hanging between life and death.

The “ministers,” the *talmidei chachamim*, are sitting there inside the pit, learning a little Torah to revive the Jewish people. They know that once a year, the king passes by the pit: בְּהִמָּצְאוֹ קָרְאוּ ה' דְּרָשׁוּ ה' – “Seek out *Hashem* when He is found. Call to Him when He is close.”<sup>4</sup>

Some of them don’t have the strength to cry out. The yoke of *galus* proved too heavy for them. Yet, some of them do cry out. But what do they cry out for? Give us food!

*Hashem* says to them: That’s what you want?! Maybe there’s something else I can give you?

Yes, give us health, etc.

This is a sorry situation. Here we are with the king’s son, who has already fallen into a coma, and instead of asking the king to get us all out of this pit, we ask for a little food so we can carry on down here for a little longer.

Those who devote themselves to Torah study need to know that they were placed in this *galus* in order to save the king’s son. This is the literal truth. We are here to get the Jewish people out of this bitter *galus*.

3 Shemos 19:24.

4 Yeshayahu 55:6.



The idea is expressed in a teaching of *Chazal*. Regarding all the holidays in the Torah, it is written:

תקריבו עולה – You shall offer a burnt offering.<sup>5</sup>

But regarding Rosh Hashanah it is written:

וַעֲשִׂיתֶם עֹלָה – You shall **make** a burnt offering.<sup>6</sup>

*Chazal* thus interpret this verse as follows:

You shall make **yourselves** like a burnt offering.<sup>7</sup>

The *avodah* on Rosh Hashanah is to forget about ourselves, to offer ourselves up for the sake of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, to pray that Heaven's glory should be increased in the world.

We need to pay attention to what is happening around us. To realize the tough situation in *galus*, to take note of *Klal Yisrael's* condition. This is the role we need to play in these days.

## Under All Conditions

In this situation, the *talmidei chachamim* need to be “faithful”. About *Moshe Rabbeinu* it is written:

בכל ביתי נאמן הוא – In all My house, he is faithful.<sup>8</sup>

Moshe had the trait of faithfulness.

What is faithfulness?

Let's say a patient is lying on the operating table and the surgeon starts to perform a complicated heart operation. In the middle of the operation, the assistant surgeon gets up and walks away. Why, what happened? Assistant heart surgeons got instructions from the labor union to go on strike. With no alternative, the head surgeon finishes the operation alone, and the patient is wheeled back to the department. The assistant who walked away is

not faithful. You can't rely on him.

The role of people devoted to Torah study is to administer life-giving drops to the Jewish people. This is why they came into *galus*. But suddenly, at the most critical moment, some problem develops, a disturbance of some sort comes along, and there are those who abruptly walk out in the middle. Everyone is under terrible pressure, everyone is crying out, but there are those who abandon their post and go out to get a drink of water or something.

Faithfulness means not to move from the job, under all conditions.

These days are the ones that determine the future for each and every one of us. The future of the family, the future of the Torah, of *Klal Yisrael*. We need to strengthen ourselves in Torah learning, in *Tefilah*, not to let other things disturb us from the task at hand. We need to be “faithful”, to show reliability.

## No King Without a People

In order to understand the process of Rosh Hashanah and the renewal it entails, let's take a look at how the world runs.

*David Hamelech* defines the way *Hashem* runs the world in the following words:

לָךְ ה' הַגְדֵּלָה וְהַגְבוּרָה וְהַתְפָּאֶרֶת וְהַנִּצָּח  
– וְהַהוּד כִּי כָל בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ לָךְ ה' הַמְּמֻלָּה  
To You, *Hashem*, is the greatness, the might, the beauty, the victory and the splendor, even all that is in heaven and on earth. To You, *Hashem*, is the kingdom...<sup>9</sup>

This verse (which alludes to the seven *Sefiros*) emphasizes the fact that the trait of *Malchus* (“the kingdom”) is separated from the other traits. It appears in a separate phrase. This is for the following reason.

There is a system of לָךְ ה' הַגְדֵּלָה וְהַגְבוּרָה וגו' כִּי כָל בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ – “To You, *Hashem*, is the greatness, the might... even all that is in heaven and on earth.”

<sup>5</sup> Bemidbar 28:19 et al.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid 29:2.

<sup>7</sup> See Mishnah Berurah 581:6.

<sup>8</sup> Bemidbar 12:7.

<sup>9</sup> I Divrei HaYamim 29:11.

This is the system of Creation. *Hashem* created the world in the six days of Creation, with all that is in it: “even all that is in heaven and on earth.” Everything was ready. Nothing was lacking; the table was set. But the “kingdom” still wasn’t there. Why? Because there can be no kingdom without a people.

An allegory illustrates the point.

There is a certain king who is very great, wise and kind. He has all the virtues there are. But he shuts himself up inside the palace and has no connection with public life. Due to this, no one knows about his virtues. People don’t know that he is wise, or that he is kind.

Only when the king starts to actively rule, to lead the people, then his kingship is recognized. When he erects city buildings with great skill and planning, his wisdom is recognized. When he institutes programs that promote his people’s welfare, his kindness is recognized. When he trounces organized crime, people recognize that he possesses might and abhors dishonesty. It is only when the king begins to govern the people that they recognize who the king is and what his virtues are.

What is the moral of the story?

When *Hashem* created heavens and earth, the world was full of goodness. The table was set. The angels sang praises, the birds chirped, but His kingdom was not yet revealed. There still was no human being to recognize *Hashem’s* “virtues”. The glory of Heaven did not yet come to revelation. When man was created, the glory of *Hashem’s* kingdom was revealed to his eyes.

## Two Levels of Gilui

However, there are two stages to the revelation of *Hashem’s* kingdom.

The first is when man was created. When man came into the world, he saw and recognized *Hashem’s* glory, and *Hashem* thus became King over the world.

Man looks up and sees the stars and constellations, he sees all the wonders of Creation, and he sings praises to *Hashem*. This is the first stage in the

revelation of *Hashem’s* kingdom.

The second stage is when man started to keep *mitzvos*, as it says about *Adam Harishon*:

וַיִּנָּחֵהוּ בְּגֵן עֵדֶן לְעִבְדָּהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ – And He placed him *Gan Eden* to work it and to guard it.<sup>10</sup>

“To work it” – this is Torah learning.

“To guard it” – these are *mitzvos*.<sup>11</sup>

Man now started to think about closeness to *Hashem*. He began to long for Him. This was beyond the natural order of the world, for it would have been enough for man to just reflect on the created world and see *Hashem’s* kingdom. But man did not suffice with that. He wanted more closeness and more revelation of *Hashem’s* kingdom.

Man thus attained a revelation of *Hashem’s* kingdom that was outside the world order. Correspondingly, *Hashem* bestowed upon him an abundance of goodness that was outside the world order.

It comes out that the creation of the world had three stages: 1. The creation itself, before man existed. 2. The creation of man and his recognition of *Hashem’s* greatness. 3. Torah learning and *mitzvah* observance.

On Rosh Hashanah as well, *Hashem* renews the world in three stages. “*Hayom haras olam* – Today is the inception of the world.” It is a new world, a renewal of all of Creation. This is the first stage, the stage of creation.

Then comes the second stage: “To You, *Hashem*, is the kingdom.” Man is created and *Hashem* rules over the world. This stage has a place only for someone who fits in the world order, who wishes to recognize *Hashem*, who wants *Hashem* to be King over him. Only such a person has the right to be in the world, since he wants to see the revelation of the glory of *Hashem’s* kingdom. But someone who sinned, who *chas v’shalom* does not want to see the revelation of the glory of *Hashem’s* kingdom, has no place in the

<sup>10</sup> Bereishis 2:15.

<sup>11</sup> Yalkut Shimoni, Eikev 863.

world.

However, we have not yet come to the high level of the revelation of the glory of *Hashem's* kingdom.

The third stage is when man does not satisfy himself with the regular order. It is not enough for him just to be in the world and to see the glory of *Hashem's* kingdom revealed. He wants more. He fulfills *mitzvos* in order to attach himself to *Hashem*, and thereby expresses his wish to see greater revelation of the glory of *Hashem's* kingdom.

The more a person does *mitzvos* in this way, the more he attains *deveikus* to *Hashem*. And he thereby receives more and more plenty from *Hashem*.

### Beyond the Set Order

This is actually what *shofar* is about. It is written in Torah sources that the power of *shofar* is in that we accept upon ourselves the yoke of *Hashem's* kingdom by blowing the *shofar*. We don't make do with the revelation of *Hashem's* kingdom that is within the order of the created world; we seek more. We desire that *Hashem* should rule over us in total oneness. We yearn to be closer to *Hashem*, for בְּאוֹר פְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ חַיִּים – “Life is found in the light of the King's countenance.”<sup>12</sup>

This aspiration we have, that the order of the created world is not enough for us, and we desire to see more and more revelation of *Hashem's* kingdom, causes *Hashem* to move Himself from *midas hadin* to *midas harachamim*.

*Midas hadin* follows the set order of things. There is a world order. However, when we ascend to a level that is above the world order, and we desire more revelation of *Hashem's* kingdom than is to be found in the world order, this brings *Hashem* not to conduct the judgment according to the world order and according to *midas hadin*. Instead, *Hashem* conducts Himself toward us in *midas harachamim*.

This is our *avodah* on Rosh Hashanah. The more we desire to see the glory of *Hashem's* kingdom in the world, the more we aspire to accept upon ourselves

the yoke of Heaven's kingdom, the more we will receive from *Hashem*, without limit!

Our aspiration for more revelation of *Hashem's* kingdom, our concern for it – this itself causes *Hashem* to bestow upon us goodness without set orders and limits, and conduct Himself toward us in *midas harachamim*.

### Three Levels of Forgiveness

#### Forgiven for Everything

The Gemara mentions<sup>13</sup> four different things that atone: *teshuvah*, Yom Kippur, suffering and the day of death.

We need to understand what is unique about these, because there are many other things that bring forgiveness for sin. For instance, Rashi cites in *Chumash Bereishis*:

There are three sorts of people who are forgiven for all their sins: he who converts to Judaism, he who ascends to greatness, and he who takes a wife, as it says, וַיֵּלֶךְ עִשָּׂו אֶל יִשְׁמָעֵאל בֶּן אֶת מַחְלָת בֶּת יִשְׁמָעֵאל וּגְו' אֶל יִשְׁמָעֵאל וַיִּקַּח אֶת מַחְלָת בֶּת יִשְׁמָעֵאל וְגו' – “Eisav went to Yishmael and took Machalas the daughter of Yishmael... as a wife”<sup>14,15</sup>

And the *Gemara* states repeatedly:

Anyone who keeps *Shabbos* properly, even if he worshiped idols like the generation of Enosh, he is forgiven.<sup>16</sup>

Another question many people ask is whether these additional things bring *Hashem's* forgiveness even if the person didn't do *teshuvah*, or are they like Yom Kippur, which needs to be combined with *teshuvah*?

There are yet other things that bring a person

<sup>12</sup> *Mishlei* 16:15.

<sup>13</sup> *Yoma* 86a.

<sup>14</sup> *Bereishis* 28:9.

<sup>15</sup> *Bereishis* 36:3.

<sup>16</sup> *Berachos* 5, *ad loc* 12; *Shabbos* 108.

forgiveness for all his sins, such as being a *sandak* at a *bris milah*, as mentioned in the *Midrash*. If there are so many opportunities for attaining forgiveness, why do we need *teshuvah*, Yom Kippur and suffering? Or perhaps it is just a figure of speech to say that the additional things bring forgiveness?

## Suspension and Atonement

There are various types of *kaparah*. *Teshuvah* brings *Hashem* to forgive, but no more than that. It does not effect atonement; in other words, it does not wipe away the sin. In this vein, our daily prayers do not ask for atonement at all. We say only “*Selach lanu, mechal lanu.*” This is because *tefillah* and *teshuvah* bring pardon and forgiveness, whereas atonement requires something further, for instance, a *korban*, or being lashed, or the atonement of suffering, or Yom Kippur, which has the power to atone.

Yet, the *Gemara* says there are called “four different categories of *kaparah*,” implying that for transgressing a positive *mitzvah*, one can attain atonement merely by doing *teshuvah*. The reason for this seems to lie in the difference between a positive *mitzvah* and a negative *mitzvah*.

Why does a *negative mitzvah* require Yom Kippur to attain atonement, while a positive *mitzvah* does not?

A positive *mitzvah* is that which a person is obligated to do for his Creator. However, failure to perform a positive *mitzvah* does not cause destruction and ruin. Due to this, *teshuvah* alone brings forgiveness and the charges are thus annulled, and as a result, the whole sin ceases to exist and is atoned. This is because the whole substance of the sin was merely an obligation that he needed to perform for his Creator, and if the obligation is no more, the sin is no more. It comes out that in this case, the *mechilah* is rightly called *kaparah* because the whole

matter is completely erased by the *mechilah*.

But it is not so with a negative *mitzvah*. Besides the charges against the sinner due to his sin, there is also the destruction that was caused by the substance of the sin, and the *tumah* that attaches itself to the soul of the sinner. Therefore *teshuvah* only “suspends” the punishment. The explanation of the matter is that in truth there is full forgiveness, because *teshuvah* has the power to bring *Hashem’s* forgiveness, but the damage still exists, since the forgiveness does not rectify the effect of the sin. Only Yom Kippur brings atonement, meaning that it wipes away the mark left by the sin, and purifies the person from the damage that the sin caused him.

Now we see that forgiveness, *mechilah*, does not have to belong uniquely to *teshuvah*. In truth, there are many things that bring *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* to forgive the charges against a person due to sinning. For instance, if a person prays for *selichah* and *mechilah*, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* pardons and forgives him even without *teshuvah*. And so it is with all the things that *Chazal* say bring *Hashem’s* forgiveness. It is not stated that these things require *teshuvah* as well. Nevertheless, in order to attain *kaparah*, even for a positive *mitzvah*, these things need to be accompanied by *teshuvah*. Nothing less will suffice.

This is because a person who transgresses a positive *mitzvah* has in his soul a certain corruption and lack of *yiras Shamayim* that caused him to sin.

So if the person did *teshuvah*, he thereby attained atonement, and no mark is left on him from the sin. As regards to his soul’s lack of *yiras Shamayim*, he rectified that by doing *teshuvah*. And his obligation to do the *mitzvah* was exempted thanks to *Hashem’s* forgiveness. And since it is not a negative *mitzvah*, it caused no destruction and ruin that would require atonement in order to rectify it. May we all merit a complete *selichah*, *mechilah* and *kapparah*. ●