

BITACHON LESSON FOR ROSH HASHANA

ראש השנה תשפ"ז

As we go through the yearly cycle of Yomim Tovim, each one presents us with a unique opportunity to tap into the **סגולת הזמן**, the auspicious nature of the time period, and allows us to elevate ourselves with the special Heavenly Shefa that is in the air each year at that time.

Each auspicious time is crowned with a unique name that encapsulates its essence and its unique qualities. *Chag Hamatzos* highlights the spiritually-charged qualities inherent in the food we ate as our nation blindly followed Hashem into a desolate desert – an enduring symbol of our birth; *Chag HaSukkos* highlights the Emunah we displayed as we submitted ourselves to the protection of the *Ananei Hakavod*; *Chag HaShavuot* highlights our spiritual seven-week journey from animalistic beings to elevated recipients of the Torah. *Yom HaKippurim* encompasses the forgiveness that Hashem lovingly gives His children each year.

"Rosh Hashana" seems to be an anomaly. "Head of the Year" seems so clinical and uninspiring as far as names go. How does this calendar marker encompass the essence of this great day?

Seemingly it would have been more appropriate to deem it "Yom Teruah", as its referred to in the Torah (Bamidbar 29:1) or "Yom Hadin", highlighting its awesomeness as the day on which everything in our life – and our life itself – is determined. Why did Chazal decide to refer to it simply as "Rosh Hashana"? (The first time this name appears as the designation of this day is in the Mishna Rosh Hashana 1:2; **בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה כָּל בָּאֵי הָעוֹלָם עוֹבְרִין לִפְנֵי כְּבִי מִדִּין**, and from that time forward that is the name used by Klal Yisroel to refer to this Yom Tov)

So, let's examine the "head".

The head is not just the highest part of a person's body. It is also the most significant, and the most unique and unlimited. If one is standing on the ground and stretches his hands heavenward, the most he will actually be able to extend his hand is a foot or two. He certainly would not be able to reach the heavens. If that person is determined, and he raises his feet to climb a tall building, he may reach a few hundred feet closer to heaven, but still fall short of getting anywhere near the actual sky. The same is true for all the limbs of the body; they are limited and restricted, pretty much rooted to the ground.

The only exception to this rule is the head. The organs of the head have a range unparalleled by any other part of the body. The nose can distinguish over a trillion scents, and detect odors from close to 100 miles away; the ears can hear thunder and other sounds from extremely far distances and the eyes can see the sun, moon, stars and galaxies that are light-years away. The eyes can view sights that purify the soul, and, sadly, can also take a person to the abyss of **שְׂאוֹל תַּחֲתִית**. As if that is not powerful enough, think about the brain – also an inhabitant of the head – and its infinite abilities. A person's mind can literally reach the **כֶּסֶף הַכְּבוֹד**!

The head enables us earthlings to be connected to Hashem! Is there anything in the world greater than that?! (As heard from Moreinu Rav Shishon Dovid Pincus Zatzal)

With this in mind, we can understand why the Yom Tov is called Rosh Hashana, Head of the Year. This awesome day enables us to connect with Hashem in the most powerful way, and allows us to "see" deep into the future, as our entire year ahead is determined, and seen by Hashem on this day.

When someone gets engaged in middle of the month of Shevat; that was already seen by Hashem on Rosh Hashana. When someone is hired for a new position on the 14th of Sivan; that was already seen by Hashem on Rosh Hashana. When someone passes away in the month of Elul; that was already seen by Hashem on the previous Rosh Hashana. When one catches a cold or stubs their toe, when a court case has a result or one gets a flat tire, when a new home is closed on or a baby is born, when one misses the bus or misses a deadline; all of this – and everything else – was already seen by Hashem on Rosh Hashana. The calendar may contain 354 entries; it's only the first 2 – the head – that really carry any weight.

Somebody was once speaking to Rav Avrohom Pam Zatzal about a relative that recently passed away. The person said "He died from Pneumonia", to which Rav Pam countered, "No, he died from וַתָּנָה תוֹקָר". Nothing "just" happens in this world; it is all decreed by Hashem, and that verdict can always be traced to the "Head" - Rosh Hashana.

So, "Head of the Year" is far more descriptive, significant and intrinsic than we ever realized!

The Posuk (Devarim 28:13) tells us:

וַתָּנָךְ ה' לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא לְזָנָב וְהִיטֵךְ רֶגְלֶיךָ לְמַעַל וְלֹא תִהְיֶה לְמַטָּה כִּי תִשְׁמָע אֶל מְצוֹת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ יָדְךָ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם לְשִׁמּוֹר וְלַעֲשׂוֹת

And Hashem will set you at the head, and not at the tail, and you will be only at the top, and you will not be at the bottom, if you obey the commandments of Hashem, which I am commanding you this day, to fulfill them.

Being a head – **וַתָּנָךְ ה' לְרֹאשׁ** – is an indication of living connected to Hashem and following His commandments; he is on top of the world. Conversely, one who lives according to his own devices, void of connection to Hashem, is a **זָנָב**; he's a bottom-feeder.

This is why we say a Tefilah on Rosh Hashana, **שְׁנֵיהֶם לְרֹאשׁ וְלֹא לְזָנָב**, *May we be the head and not the tail* (an ancient Tefilah that dates back to the times of the Geonim). We are not asking to be a top producer at our company, to be a boss, or to be the head of a group or a division; we are asking for something much more elevated. We are asking to be connected to Hashem in the highest possible way! We are asking for a New Year in which we live with Emunah and Bitachon, firmly tethered to Hashem. We are asking that our calendar for the year ahead be filled with 354 days marked "Living with Hashem" circled in red!

"Rosh Hashana" is the beginning of a brand new year-long relationship between us and Hashem. The "Head" of the year is a lot more than a random designation; it is very much the essence of the day, and the essence of the entire year ahead.

בְּבִרְכַּת תְּכַלֶּה שָׁנָה וְקִלְוִיתֶיהָ, תַּחֲלֵךְ שָׁנָה וּבִרְכּוֹתֶיהָ

כְּתִיבָה וַחֲתִימָה טוֹבָה!