



From the desk of
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Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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OHR

Rosh Hashanah

HAMELECH

Sweet Not Sour

A person is to eat certain foods on Rosh Hashanah, such as dates, beets, leek, etc. These grow quickly or are sweet. Therefore they symbolize blessing and prosperity and pleasantness. Eating them at the outset of the year sets the tone for the whole year.

Additionally, we are taught to refrain from eating sour-tasting foods. Ben Ish Hai and Mishna Berurah draw a conclusion that a person must make extra effort not to become angry on Rosh Hashanah. That certainly is not the tone he wishes to set for the year.

Heads Not Tails

Some also have an animal head or a fish head and pray to be heads and not tails. The *Mishna* in Avot (4:15) teaches that it is better to be a tail to a good group than the head of a lower group. On Rosh Hashanah, however, we strive for the best and try to become the head of even the good group.

Good Beginnings

In Kohelet (7:8) we are taught, "The end of a matter is good from its beginning." Our Sages expound: When the beginning is good, the end is good. Elisha ben Avuya was a great Torah scholar. But he went off the *derech*. He attributed this, in part, to his father's ulterior motives in his early upbringing. Already at his *brit*, his father set him aside to learn Torah for the sake of achieving honor.

Blessings Not Curses

Shortly before Rosh Hashanah, we read in the Torah the blessings and the curses. The Gemara says that this is meant to indicate: May the year and its curses conclude; may the new year begin with blessings only.

Now, this does not happen automatically. Obviously, it means that when we read off the blessings and curses, we take the matter to heart and plan on improving our ways.

The Belzer Rov explained that just as we can read and learn the Torah portion pertaining to *korbanot* (sacrifices) and it is considered as if we offered those sacrifices, so too, we can read about the curses and internalize the message. Having done that, it can be considered as if we already received the curses and we can thereafter hope for the best.

Rosh Hashanah Attitudes

Kabbalistically, the first day of Rosh Hashanah corresponds to Leah Imeinu and the second day to Rochel. The first day is a stricter type of judgment. On the first day, our focus should be on spirituality and the *Shechinah*. On the second day we may pray for material success as well, in the merit of Rochel's humility and selflessness.

We spend a great deal of Rosh Hashanah immersed in prayer. Instead of focusing upon our own needs and barking out requests and demands, a much more noble approach is to



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focus upon Hashem's Omnipotence and Sovereignty and to view ourselves as lacking in every sense and unworthy. Anything we ask for, we must beg for as paupers begging for handouts, humbly.

Decisions and Decrees

We must realize that Rosh Hashanah is a crucial day. So much is decided and decreed by Heaven on that day. For example, the Chazon Ish was once sitting and a fly kept on disturbing him. Someone present attempted to chase away the fly. The Chazon Ish said, "There's no point trying to chase it away. It is the fly of Rosh Hashanah." I.e., already on Rosh Hashanah it was decided that I am to suffer by having that fly disturb me.

Realistic Resolutions

Rabbi Leib Chasman, Mashgiach of Chevron Yeshiva, told Rav Shalom Schwadron to keep resolutions small and within reach. He went on to tell a story about Rav Meir Chadash. Rav Chadash lived in Czarist Russia under the regime of Czar Nikolai. Jewish blood was spilled freely in those days. Rav Chadash walked outside one day and a soldier ordered him to come to the police station. He stood him up against a wall and prepared to shoot. Rav Meir whispered the *vidui* (confession). Suddenly, a higher official poked his head in and said, "Leave him alone!" so the soldier let him go. Rav Meir felt born again and as he hurried home, he immediately made all sorts of grand resolutions of how he would dedicate his life

totally to Hashem. Unfortunately, as he continued walking, even in those few minutes, the initial surprise and thankfulness began to wear off. After a few days, not too much was left of his resolutions and life returned to routine.

Rav Meir learned from here a lesson for life. Sometimes, at moments of inspiration, the *yetzer horah* has us strive for levels way beyond our reach, only to have us left with nothing. While it is true that someone previously unaffiliated should grasp moments of inspiration and make a drastic change for the better, someone who is already on the right track should tone down his resolutions to something small and quite manageable. That is the key to success.

We Welcome Year 5781

So how can we best prepare for the upcoming Rosh Hashanah? Let us humble ourselves before Hashem and realize that we need Him for every last thing in our lives. That is true *Malchuyot* – acceptance of His Sovereignty.

Let us eat sweet foods and avoid anger. Let us be giving and forgiving.

The forthcoming year is תשפ"א. May we see a fulfilment of the verse מאשפת ירים אביון "from the refuse heaps, He raises the pauper."

תשפ"א also bears the numerical value of תשועה salvation. May we merit to see Hashem's salvation in all areas.

Ketiva Vachatima Tovah
Shabbat Shalom
Mordechai Malka