

# A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO A POWERFUL ROSH HASHANAH



*A guide to getting the most out of Rosh Hashanah*

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*with insights from*  
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*Rosh Hashanah spans two full days of profound connection with Hashem, achieved through Davening, the performance of Mitzvoth, and adherence to traditional Minhagim. As we embark on this journey of Kedusha, you may have pondered the significance of each action and minhag and how comprehending them can amplify the impact of these forty-eight hours.*

*In the subsequent explanation, we will delve into the core of our Rosh Hashanah observance. By gaining insight into what we do and why we do it, you will uncover a deeper sense of purpose and meaning behind these pivotal days. Equipped with this knowledge, you can approach Rosh Hashanah with renewed intention and a profound connection to the spiritual essence of each practice. This, in turn, will lead to a more potent and meaningful Rosh Hashanah experience.*

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אף כי הכרת הטוב to HKB"ח who gives me the ability to do all this  
חכמתי עמדה לי

R' EM who has enabled me to have יישוב הדעת.

And as Rabbi Akiva said שלי ושלכם שלה הוא . And the two parts she wrote.

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## **What is Rosh Hashanah?**

(Based on the first maaamar of the Sifsei Chaim on Rosh Hashanah)

There seem to be a number of themes of Rosh Hashanah. Malchus, Brias Haolam, Din. How do they work together and how are we to experience them?

### **Malchus - The Acceptance of God's Sovereignty**

Rosh Hashanah marks the day when we coronate Hashem as our King. It is also the anniversary of the creation of Adam and Chava. They were the first people created and without subjects, there cannot be a King. On that day, they willingly accepted Hashem as their King, setting a powerful precedent for us to follow each year.

We manifest this acceptance in every Rosh Hashanah tefila. The first addition to Shemoneh Esreh includes the plea, "Remember us for life, the King who desires life...". In the third bracha of Shemoneh Esreh, we alter the conclusion from "Merciful Holy God" to "The Holy King." The pivotal blessing during Yom Tov culminates with, "King of the entire world, Who sanctifies Yisrael and their times." Similarly, Kiddush also concludes in this manner. The theme of Malchus, or kingship, of resonates throughout the entire day, underscoring our recognition of Hashem as our sovereign ruler.

### **Din - The Day of Judgment**

However, on Rosh Hashanah, it is also the Day of Judgment. But this judgment differs significantly from the typical decision-making process of a court. In a regular court, decisions are rendered based on past actions, leading to rewards or punishments. It's a retrospective judgment.

The judgment Rosh Hashanah is more akin to a business making decisions at the end of a fiscal year. It combines forward-looking considerations such as setting goals for the upcoming year, determining worthwhile investments, and allocating resources with insights drawn from the past year's performance. Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of Hashem's fiscal year, where He decides where to invest and in whom.

This judgment evaluates how people utilized the resources Hashem granted them. On one hand, it looks back at the previous year's actions, but it also shapes what we'll receive to fulfill our goals for the next year. Just as in business, sometimes we can persuade the CEO that despite last year's less profitable investments, the coming year will yield better results.

If we wholeheartedly accept Hashem's Kingship and demonstrate how we will use our abilities more effectively than the previous year, the acceptance of His Kingship and the judgment align, leading to an inscription in the Book of Life.

### **Creation of the World**

This is the significance of the connection to the creation of the world. On the first day of creation, all the capabilities and resources to fulfill Hashem's will and crown Him were given to Adam and Chava. Each year, this theme is repeated for every person, emphasizing their unique mission.

## **Teshuva on Rosh Hashanah - Forward-Looking Teshuva**

The days of Rosh Hashanah mark the beginning of the Ten Days of Teshuva. However, the nature of Teshuva on Rosh Hashanah differs. It is forward-looking Teshuva, aiming to dedicate the upcoming year to using one's capabilities to fulfill responsibilities within the circumstances Hashem provides. This is a distinct form of Teshuva.

If classic Teshuva was already undertaken during Elul, rededicating oneself to Hashem becomes more straightforward.

According to the ך"ו, Rosh Hashanah holds a special significance tied to Klal Yisrael's journey of Teshuva following the sin of the eigel. This critical moment marked the beginning of their collective acceptance of Teshuva. As the Teshuva process initiated at Matan Torah took place on Rosh Hashanah, one of the facets of the mitzvah of blowing the Shofar on this day serves as a reminder of that pivotal event.

### **Why are there Two Days of Rosh Hashanah?**

The second day of Rosh Hashanah holds a unique status in that it is observed both in Eretz Yisrael and in the galus. This distinction sets it apart from other two-day Yomim Tovim, which result from the galus of the Jewish people. Jews in the diaspora lacked the precise knowledge of Rosh Chodesh because the determination of the beginning of the month was made by the Sanhedrin in Eretz Yisrael. Consequently, they would observe two days due to uncertainty about when Rosh Chodesh had been officially declared.

However, the observance of two days of Rosh Hashanah extended even to Eretz Yisrael, where they indeed knew which day was Rosh Chodesh. Now, why is this the case? There is a Halachic answer, but there's also a deeper aspect related to machshava.

According to Chazal, Rosh Hashanah involves two distinct types of divine scrutiny. The first is a strict assessment of each individual, focusing on their actions, decisions, and overall conduct throughout the year. Did they utilize all the gifts and opportunities granted by Hashem? Did they successfully navigate challenges, ultimately accumulating more Mitzvot than Aveiros, thereby deserving another year of Hashem's investment in their growth? This judgment can be exceptionally stringent, to the point that, as stated in Untaneh Tokef, "Even the angels are terrified of that scrutiny."

However, there exists a second, more compassionate form of scrutiny that takes into account a person's communal contributions. Even if an individual might not pass the rigorous assessment when considered in isolation, they may still serve a vital role within the community, bringing unique qualities that no one else possesses. Therefore, they merit evaluation based on their specific contributions to the collective.

In earlier times, Klal Yisrael possessed the ability to withstand the more demanding scrutiny, and for most people, one day of Rosh Hashanah sufficed for judgment. However, as the generations progressed, the collective ability to endure such intense scrutiny diminished. Consequently, the need for a second day of Rosh Hashanah, centered around the softer, more lenient judgment, became the prevailing norm. This transition reflects the evolving nature of the Jewish people's spiritual journey over time.

## Requests on Rosh Hashanah

The judgment of Rosh Hashanah is the allocation of resources for the upcoming year. The Tefilos reflect that. We request life, livelihood, health and all our other needs. But Chazal seem to disagree whether it is correct to do that.

The Tikunei Zohar imparts a profound insight: approaching Hashem with requests on Rosh Hashanah, simply saying, "Give me," is akin to the incessant barking of a dog. (The onomatopoeia of a bark resembles the Aramaic phrase for 'give me!') It might lead one to conclude that making any requests on Rosh Hashanah, apart from the desire to coronate the King, is improper.

However, when we examine the structure of our Rosh Hashanah Tefilos, it appears quite the opposite. Our Rosh Hashanah davening is replete with requests for our physical needs and desires. How can this apparent contradiction be reconciled? Even the very first addition to the Shemoneh Esreh (the Amidah) on Rosh Hashanah is a request: "Remember us for life... and inscribe us in the Book of Life."

Rav Chaim Volozhin chose to minimize his personal requests, aligning himself with the teachings of the Zohar. However, Rabbi Yisrael Salanter offered a different perspective, particularly suited to our era. He believed that for our generation, it is not incorrect to express our desires openly. While we may externally follow the approach of Rav Chaim Volozhin by not articulating our desires, the silence is often disingenuous. Truthfully, we do harbor numerous physical wants and needs.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter aptly stated, "It is better to be a truthful dog than a deceitful person," even if we are deceiving ourselves. Therefore, it is appropriate to express our desires openly because it is incorrect to believe we are deceiving Hashem, and even worse, we might be deluding ourselves into thinking we are greater than we genuinely are.

Another approach, which may be within our reach, is understanding that what we ask for is, on some level, the means to serve Hashem. Whether it's life, health, children, or wealth, while we certainly desire these physical blessings, every believing Jew wants them to serve Hashem in some capacity. Thus, requesting these things with the intent to serve Hashem truthfully aligns with our innermost aspirations. And that is our request for the resources to coronate Hashem.

Rabbi Moshe Shapiro zt"l supported the approach of one of his students, who suggested beginning personal requests by saying, "Hashem, I am Your soldier. I wish to serve You more effectively. Therefore, I seek these things to enhance my service to You." This reframes the request, transforming it from the clamor of a dog demanding, "Give me, Give me," into a sincere plea for the means to serve Hashem more profoundly.

It is worth noting that the prayers such as זכרנו and other additions to the Shemoneh Esreh on Rosh Hashanah, which consist of requests, were introduced later by the Geonim. The original Rosh Hashanah prayer did not include these requests; they were added subsequently to reflect the evolving needs and perspectives of the Jewish people.

## Simcha on Rosh Hashanah

As we acknowledge Rosh Hashanah as the day of reckoning, it raises the fundamental question of how we should approach this occasion. Should it predominantly be viewed as the Day of Judgment, a time when individuals naturally feel apprehensive, pondering what their verdict will be, especially in such a critical trial?

Alternatively, should Rosh Hashanah primarily be seen as a Yom Tov, a day of celebration? Many poskim assert the presence of a mitzvah of Simchas Yom Tov on Rosh Hashanah.

In the times of Nechemiah, when Rosh Hashanah approached, the nation began to feel anxious, and tears welled up as they contemplated the impending judgment. At this moment, Ezra and Nehemiah instructed them: "Be glad, for the joy of Hashem is your strength."

The proper approach, then, is to recognize that we are indeed in a court of judgment, our lives hanging in the balance. But simultaneously, we must remember that the Judge is our Merciful Father, who desires to render a verdict of innocence and bless us with all that is good.

This perspective helps to explain why we do not recite Hallel on Rosh Hashanah. The Gemarra relates that the angels once questioned Hashem, asking, "Why do the Jews not recite Hallel?" Hashem's reply was profound: "When the books of life and death are open, how can they sing Hallel?" We find ourselves in a state of security regarding the verdict, yet we cannot yet fully express our joy, and thus Hallel is omitted. (This will be explained further below.)

The Vilna Gaon experienced profound happiness during the Tekias Shofar. His perspective was that we are incredibly fortunate to participate in the coronation of the King. Furthermore, after the Musaf service, he would instruct the Chazan to sing the Kaddish joyously, for we had completed the investiture of the King in our hearts and minds.

### What Should I Wear?

The Shulchan Aruch paskens that one showers, shaves, and gets dressed for Rosh Hashanah as a Yom Tov. This is based on the Midrash that says we show our trust in Hashem that He will perform a miracle for us, and our verdict will be good.

The Bais Yosef explains (if he did not say it, it would be impossible to say such a thing) that we are like two brothers who grew up together and we therefore can depend on Hashem. But that 'brotherhood' is based on the Tzelem Elokim that we have, which makes us some imitation of Hashem. But a person who has destroyed their Tzelem Elokim cannot depend on this connection. In as much as we coronate Hashem and bring out our Tzelem Elokim we can express and feel joy.

But only because we know that without that connection, we are nothing. Only if we represent that connection can we depend on the miracle.

But at the same time, we do not wear our fanciest clothes, because it is still a day of judgement. There is the balance of "Rejoice in awe."



There are those who do wear a Kittel or all white like on Yom Kippur.

### Crying during Davening

But since Rosh Hashanah is a day of joy, should we cry during davening? It would seem obvious that crying during davening on Rosh Hashanah is praiseworthy. However, there is a discussion among the Poskim.

The Mateh Ephraim says that it is correct to cry on Rosh Hashanah even when it is on Shabbos. And even someone who does not cry with emotion should daven in a way that sounds as if he is crying. The Pasuk in Tehillim says, "Hashem hear the sound of my crying", implying even if it is not actual crying.

When one is overcome with tears that well up that is a sign that you are now being weighed in the Heavenly court. And when one cries, the stars and constellations cry with you.

But the Vilna Gaon seems to disagree. He says that one should not cry on Rosh Hashanah. But R Zundel of Salant explains that this is only to bring oneself to tears intentionally. But tears that arise from a sense of closeness to Hashem and an overwhelming emotion of Dveikus, are correct and praiseworthy on Rosh Hashanah.

### Vidui

Yom Kippur is the day of Teshuva, not Rosh Hashanah. But Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of Aseres Yemei Teshuva. What is the approach to Vidui (recounting your sins) on Rosh Hashanah? (This is a very esoteric topic, and we will try to explain it as best as possible.)

In the Zohar there are different statements about Vidui. <sup>1</sup>"One should not mention sins on this day of Rosh Hashanah". A sin that is mentioned can be brought up in front of the King and desecrate His Name.

But on the other hand, the Zohar says, "One who mentions his sins before HKB"”H, those sins are judged by Him, and one who is judged by Hashem will be for the good."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the ARIZ"”L would say Vidui so quietly that even he could not hear the words. In addition, he would only say it during Tekias Shofar when the Satan was confused and could not prosecute us with the sins being recounted. (This was between the sets of Tekios not during the Tekios themselves.)

This issue is also relevant in Avinu Malkeinu. The first one is, "We sinned before You", which is the essential Vidui. Based on the prohibition on saying Vidui the Bais Yosef paskens to not say it.

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<sup>1</sup> זוהר חלק ב דף קפ"א - ביומא דא לא אצטריך בר נש לפרשא חטאוי קמי אחרא, בגין דכמה אינון דנטלי ההיא מלה וסלקי לה לעילא, ואית סהדין בההיא מלה, ומה (מיכה ז ה) משוכבת חיקך שמור פתחי פיך, כל שכן אינון דאזלי ועייני לקטרגא לון וסהדי עליה, וכל שכן דחציפו איהו לקמי כלא, וחלול שמא דקודשא בריך הוא, ועל דא כתיב (קהלת ה ה) אל תתן את פיך לחטיא את בשרך.

<sup>2</sup> זוהר חלק ג דף רל"א - כמה דאתמר, בההוא יומא של ראש השנה, דקיימין שבעין קתדראין למידן דינא לעלמא, כמה אינון מארי תריסין קטיגורין דקיימי לעילא, אלין מיימינין לזכו, ואלין משמאלין לחובה, לאדכרא חובין דעלמא, חובין דכל חד וחד: ועל דא אצטריך לבר נש לפרשא חובין, כל חד וחד כמה דאיהו, בגין דמאן דמפרש חטאוי, לא אתמסר דיניה אלא בידא דמלכא קודשא בריך הוא בלחודוי, ומאן דדאין ליה קודשא בריך הוא, איהו לטב, ועל דא בעא דוד מלכא (ואמר). (תהלים מג א) שפטני אלהי"ם, אנת ולא אחרא, וכן שלמה אמר, (מ"א ח נט) לעשות משפט עבדו, הוא ולא אחרא, וכל בית דין בדלין ממנו:

Our minhag is to say it, but to join it with the second one. “Avinu Malkeinu, we have sinned before You, but still we have no King but You.” That removes it from being a Vidui and changes it to a statement of Malchus.

### What to Do?

In the portions of davening where we already acknowledge our sins, it is appropriate to quietly recite Vidui to Hashem. However, it's essential to note that this isn't the primary focus of Rosh Hashanah. The major theme of Teshuva and Vidui is reserved for the subsequent Aseres Yemei Teshuva and Yom Kippur.

### שהחיינו

Like every Yom Tov, we recite the שהחיינו on Rosh Hashanah, either when lighting candles or when making Kiddush. However, the שהחיינו on Rosh Hashanah carries a special significance. On other Yom Tovim, we express gratitude to Hashem for granting us the opportunity to fulfill the infrequent Mitzvoh of that particular day. But on Rosh Hashanah, this bracha takes on an additional layer of meaning.

The שהחיינו on Rosh Hashanah is a heartfelt expression of gratitude for having lived through the previous year. It acknowledges that we are here to welcome the new year because Hashem's decree for the past year allowed us to continue our journey of life. It's a powerful reminder of the preciousness of life and a moment to thank Hashem for the opportunity to stand before Him once again on this special day.

### Maariv

#### לעילא ולעילא

The words לעילא ולעילא are added in Kadish. (Eidot Hamizrach do not add them.)

יְהִי שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וְלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא: וְיִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא. בְּרִידָה הוּא. לְעֵלָּא (בְּעֵשִׂי"ת לְעֵלָּא לְעֵלָּא מְכַל) מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנִחְמַתָּא דְאַמִּירָן בְּעֵלְמָא. וְאַמְרוּ אָמֵן:

During the year we say that Hashem is לעילא above all Bracha. But during Aseres Yemei Teshuva the word לעילא is doubled. During the period of Din, Hashem sits on the upper throne of judgment. Therefore, we remind ourselves that Hashem is in the upper realms sitting on the His throne.

#### לדוד מזמור

In many shuls there is a minhag to say the Perek Tehillim of לדוד מזמור before עלינו. (There are various opinions when exactly it is said.) The ARIZ"l instituted it as a segulah for livelihood. There are a few possible reasons why. (The ARIZ"l says there is a kabalistic Name that is a source of income in the Perek.)

In Pshat, the Pasuk says, “Who shall ascend the mountain of Hashem? One whose hands are clean, and mouth is truthful.” That is a reminder of how we should earn our living.

There is another possibility. The Gemarra asks, “Rav Levi said: It is written: “The earth and all it contains is the Lord’s,” and it is written elsewhere: “The heavens are the Lord’s and the earth He has given over to mankind”. It seems to be a contradiction. But actually, the Pasuk that says that the earth is the Lord’s refers to the situation before a blessing is recited. The other is after a bracha is said.” That Pasuk that everything belongs to Hashem is in לְדָוִד מִזְמוֹר. When we start the year by reminding ourselves that everything really comes from Hashem, only then can we acquire Hashem’s bracha.

The first Rebbe of Belz explained that it is to remind us that everything comes from Hashem. We say the Pausk, “The Bracha comes from Hashem, and the assistance, from Hashem who saves us.” We begin Rosh Hashanah with the realization that we are starting the year with nothing. Everything comes from Hashem.

### **The Power of Saying לשנה טובה**

The Tur states that it was the custom in Ashkenaz to bless (as suggested by the Taz, to pray for) one's friend for a good year. This is not merely a greeting but a sincere tefila for your friend to have a prosperous year. The Mishnah Berurah emphasizes that when blessing a woman, you should use the feminine form.

The blessing consists of two parts: 'to be written' and 'to be sealed.' The Gemarra teaches us that the Tzaddikim have their fate written and sealed for good on Rosh Hashanah, while the Reshaim have theirs determined for the opposite. Those who fall in between, not wholly devoted to the service of Hashem but not Reshaim either, await sealing on Yom Kippur.

The Ran's interpretation is that this refers to the annual judgment. However, the Asara Maamaros and the GR"A maintain that it pertains to the final judgment after a person's passing. But for the yearly din, everyone is signed on Rosh Hashanah and sealed on Yom Kippur. This disagreement has ramifications for this Bracha.

According to all opinions, it is appropriate to give this blessing on the first night of Rosh Hashanah. According to the Ran, after Musaf, the righteous are already sealed for good, so giving this blessing could imply they are of average standing, not righteous. Hence, it is not given after Musaf.

But what about the second night? Most opinions maintain that the second night and day constitute a new judgment, as it might be the actual Rosh Hashanah. Therefore, the rules of the first day apply. However, others argue that because we already have a fixed calendar, giving this bracha again implies that the person is not a Tzaddik, and thus, this bracha should not be given.

According to the Asara Maamaros and the GR"A, one can give the blessing until Yom Kippur, as the decree is only sealed then. Hence, you should refrain from saying 'And be sealed' when giving this blessing before Yom Kippur. But the entire Rosh Hashanah and even Aseres Yemei Teshuva you can say, “To be written”.

## The Rosh Hashana Meal

### Making the Seudah an Avoda

The Seudah of Rosh Hashanah is an integral part of the Yom Tov. The foods we eat, and the ones we do not, all reflect the depth of the upcoming Din. Therefore, it is a Seduah of Simcha; but also a meal that should prepare us for the upcoming davening and shofar of the next day.

#### סימנים

(Reb. Rachel Rudman)

How do we understand the significance of eating or looking at different unusual foods called the simanim on Rosh Hashanah. Aren't we beginning a very serious day, a day of judgment?

The origin for simanim is in the Gemarra Masechet Krisus, with a discussion of the necessity to anoint kings by a body of water that is continuously flowing, as a symbol that the king's rulership will have continuity. This is learned when Dovid Hamelech commands Benayahu to take his son Shlomo to the Gichon and anoint him there. The Gemarra then says, now that we know signs have significance, a person should be accustomed to eat (and in Masechet Horiyus it says he should look at) on Rosh Hashanah gourd, fenugreek, leek, beets, and dates.

Firstly, why are we focusing on food on this most serious day of the year? In addition, doesn't the Torah command not to engage in divinations, witchcraft, sorcery, magic, etc.?

When are we transgressing the prohibition of לא תנחשו ?

Says the Maharsha, if a person is relying on superstitions- for example, if you would say "if the candle goes out, you will not live out the year", then you are transgressing this prohibition. It ascribes too much meaning to bad luck and can erode your belief in Hakadosh Baruch Hu. We believe that Hashem can change bad decrees if we will better our ways.

So, what are we doing by placing these foods on our table on this most serious day? There are many sources that discuss the simanim, I will mention only a few. Says the Meiri, "As we look at or we eat the food, we recite a yehi ratzon, davening for something that is connected to that food. And those foods with the recital of the yehi ratzon awaken us to come closer to Hashem. For example, we eat the dates and say that it should be Hashem's will that our enemies will cease. That can awaken us to come closer to Hashem and perhaps abolish any evil decrees of our enemies harming us. It can also be a call to Hashem to help us remove the enemies within us, the battles that we fight within ourselves to do something wrong.

Says the Chayei Adam, we have a custom to eat food that symbolizes good things happening. He writes in parentheses to look at Ramban in the beginning of Lech Lecha, "All positive decrees from above if they are actualized in the world, they won't be changed. The entire Sefer Bereishis is full of a foreshadow of what will happen to us, מעשה אבות סימן לבנים, a blueprint of our experiences. If Hashem decrees something, if there is a nevuah about

something, and it is given a physical form in this world, the decree becomes irreversible if it's for good. Avraham was told he had to walk through Eretz Yisrael, as a way to begin the fulfillment of the nevuah that his descendants would inherit Eretz Yisrael.

When we eat these foods, we are creating a reality that it will be a good year. We don't just say we wish it should be a good, sweet year, but we create a reality that this is going to be a good, sweet year.

The Tur says that we eat food whose name has significance of something we daven for. For example, foods that the name either name implies merit, or increased mitzvot performance, or the destruction of our enemies.

יהי רצון שתחדש עלינו שנה טובה ומתוקה

May we be zocheh to a year of chiddush, renewal in our avodas Hashem and a year where we appreciate the sweetness of a Torah way of life.

### Nuts

There is a minhag to not eat nuts on Rosh Hashanah. The Mishnah Berurah brings two reasons. Either they cause one's mouth to be dry and hoarse, and it is hard to daven. Or because the Gematria of nut in Hebrew is the same as sin.

Many point out that the Gematria is actually off by one. The missing one is the Aleph in the word חטא. That Aleph is a reference to Hashem. Even when we do a sin, Hashem is there, and we do not forget him. But a sin without an Aleph is even worse, and that we do not want to do.

### Vinegar

Many people are careful not to cook with vinegar or other sour or bitter ingredients. There are various opinions about spicy foods, such as spicy peppers. Even lemon is mentioned not to be used. But if the taste is not noticeable, bitter, or sour ingredients can be used. And spicy ingredients can be used.

It is important to remember that all of these are just hints. Acting bitter or sour is definitely incorrect. It is more important to act with Midos and Derech Eretz to everyone. You should not get angry, especially within your family. This is even for 'holy' reasons. If someone is davening in a way that disturbs you, then move. Whatever it might be, if we want Hashem to treat us without Din, we have to treat the people around us with mercy also. (Heard in the name of R Wolbe ZT"L.)

### Shacharis

We have many machzorim that translate and explain all of the davening and piyyutim. I would like to emphasize just a few points that are unusual in the way they are performed.

### המלך

One of the awe-inspiring moments that elevates our spirits to a higher plane is when the Chazan commences Shacharis on Rosh Hashanah. This moment stands in stark contrast to other Yomim Tovim, where Pesukei Dzimra concludes quietly. However, on this unique day,

as Pesukei Dzimra concludes, the Chazan rises from his seat and approaches the Amud, as he begins to chant the word "Hamelech" – The King. What sets this apart is not only the words but also the tense in which they are uttered; we say, "The King who is sitting" in the present tense, as opposed to the usual "The King who sits."

Why is this done?

The answer is as clear as it is profound. This Nusach serves to underscore the fact that today is not merely a day when Hashem assumes His role as King, but it is, in essence, the Day of Judgment itself. On this day, He is not merely the King; He sits in judgment on His Royal throne, actively assessing our actions and decisions.

On one occasion, the renowned Bnei Yisaschar fainted as the Chazan began this chant. When he later regained consciousness, he shared his experience, saying, "In that moment, I envisioned myself standing before a majestic king who inquired why I was absent from the royal coronation ceremony. Naturally, I fainted, overwhelmed by the profound sense of awe and responsibility in the presence of the Divine."

### **The Missing Hallel**

On Rosh Hashanah, despite being a Yom Tov, we do not recite Hallel. According to the Gemara, the malachim question Hashem, asking why Klal Yisrael does not say Hallel. Hashem responds by pointing out that it's impossible because the books of life and death are open!

But who are these malachim, and why are they concerned about whether we say Hallel or not?

The Pasuk states, "Blow the shofar, hidden on the day of our chag." This implies that the celebratory aspect of Rosh Hashanah is concealed because of the solemnity of the occasion, marked by the open books of life and death. Consequently, Hallel is left unsaid.

Every Mitzvah creates an angel, and even the desire to fulfill a mitzvah generates one. In this context, these questioning malachim are the ones associated with the missing Hallel. They question why they remain unfulfilled. An unfulfilled desire, as we know, can often be even more potent and meaningful.

But Hashem responds that because of the solemnity of Rosh Hashanah they have to remain unsaid and incomplete.

Nonetheless, internally, a Jew must still yearn to recite Hallel. But we do have an expression of our joy of the Hallel. It is through crowning the King on Rosh Hashanah through the sound of the shofar.

## **Krias HaTorah and Haftorah**

The meaning of the Krias HaTorah and Haftorah of Rosh Hashanah are an integral part of the Avoda of the day.

### **First Day**

The reading for the first day is about the birth of Yitzchok. The reading begins, “And Hashem remembered Sara as He said”. Chazal say, “Sara Rachel and Chana were remembered on Rosh Hashanah.” We say in the bracha of zichronos in Musaf, “Just as You remembered Sara, so You should remember us.” We are remembering the fact that Hashem remembers us and judges us.

We also read the expulsion of Yishmael. It seems unusual to read that on a day of rachamim. But even that has a positive connotation. When Yishmael is dying of thirst and calls out to Hashem, Hashem wants to hear his Tefilos. The malachim though object. “Isn’t he going to kill Your children at the time of the Churban?” Hashem responds, “But what is he now? I judge a person as they are.” We also request that Hashem judge us as we are now, standing in shul davening.

The Haftorah continues this theme, as we read about the remembrance of Chana which was also on Rosh Hashanah. We read the song of Chana which praises Hashem after he answered her. We join in that praise as we daven to be remembered.

### **Second Day**

The second day we read about the Akeida. At the Akeida Avrohom and Yitzchok were moser nefesh for Hashem completely and absolutely. On Rosh Hashanah we are being judged. But the greatest defense attorney is that we are descendants of Avrohom and Yitzchok, and we are also willing to be moser nefesh. As we read, we should imagine ourselves performing such an act of mesiras nefesh.

We also ask that just as Avrohom tied up Yitzchok and we are his descendants, Hashem should bind the prosecuting angels (מטה אפרים).

The last few Pesukim describe how far away and unknown to Avrohom, Hashem was arranging the marriage between Yitzchok and Rivka. We too should trust in Hashem that the plans He is making for us are good, even if we cannot see them happening.

The Haftorah of the second day begins with how Hashem remembers the dedication of Klal Yisrael to go into the desert and throughout the generations. It ends with how precious we are to Hashem, that we are like a beloved child that whenever the parent mentions their name it brings new love and affection. We are that precious child of Hashem.

## Shofar

### Link to Shofar Download

<https://tinyurl.com/ShofarShortPage>

<https://tinyurl.com/ShofarPageLong>

### Seven Times למנוחה

#### Introduction

Before the Tekias Shofar, we recite the forty-seventh chapter of Tehillim seven times. What makes this particular chapter significant in introducing the Shofar, especially when there are three other chapters in Tehillim that mention the Shofar? Furthermore, why do we recite a chapter attributed to the sons of Korach?

#### Universal Sovereignty of Hashem

A primary objective of Rosh Hashanah is for Klal Yisrael to lead the world in recognizing the sovereignty of Hashem. This theme is emphasized early in the addition to the Shemoneh Esreh prayers for Rosh Hashanah. In the third bracha of המלך הקדוש, we daven for Hashem's awe to extend over all nations.

This goal of universal recognition of Hashem is not exclusive to Rosh Hashanah; it is embedded in the Shema, which we recite twice daily. According to Rashi, the Shema signifies that Hashem, currently our God, should be acknowledged as the one God of the entire world. So, what distinguishes Rosh Hashanah?

#### Coronation of Hashem

While we proclaim this recognition daily in the Shema, Rosh Hashanah signifies the coronation of Hashem over the entire world. The tefilos of Rosh Hashanah consistently revolve around this profound concept.

The Yesod V'shoresh Havoda explains that this is why Aleinu holds a central place in the Musaf prayers. Aleinu articulates how all nations will ultimately acknowledge Hashem. As we commence the tefilah of Malchus, we recite Aleinu. Aleinu can be divided into two paragraphs, each representing a stage in this process. The first paragraph underscores Hashem's majesty, our submission to Him, and the truth of our God. This represents the goal Klal Yisrael aspires to achieve.

#### Complete Revelation of Hashem

The second paragraph acknowledges that the world is not yet perfect and anticipates the day when all of humanity, without exception, will recognize Hashem. It describes different segments of humanity coming to this realization.

The essence of Rosh Hashanah's Avodah is to intensify our recognition and clarity regarding Hashem's sovereignty to the extent that it extends to the entire world. When Klal Yisrael fully recognizes Hashem, the rest of the world will inevitably follow suit.



## **The Shofar and Its Role**

The Shofar plays a pivotal role in this revelation, as indicated in the selected chapter of Tehillim. The Pasuk states, "Elokim arises by the teruah Hashem by the sound of the Shofar," symbolizing two stages of revelation.

The Malbim explains that the two different names of Hashem here represent these two stages. Elokim is the Name of Teva, where Hashem's presence is veiled, while Hashem is the Name of miracles, where Hashem's presence is manifest. The Shofar serves as a means to bring miracles into the world, as reflected by the Name Hashem.

## **Missed Opportunity and Restoration**

Initially, the world had the potential to reach this level at Matan Torah. Hashem offered the Torah to all nations, with the intention that they would accept that the world operates according to the Torah given to Klal Yisrael. Klal Yisrael would have been a "holy kingdom and a nation of Cohanim," while other nations would support the Cohanim in serving Hashem. However, the nations declined this opportunity.

The Gemara in Zevachim recounts how the nations were aware of Matan Torah but chose not to participate. Rather than embracing this truth, they decided to let Hashem give the Torah to Klal Yisrael and opted out.

Korach, however, did not accept this change. He wanted to maintain a direct connection between Klal Yisrael and Hashem, a "holy nation." This forms the basis of his questions. He believed that those fully clothed in techeiles (a symbol of holiness) did not need an external mark of kedusha. Korach even carried the Aron, feeling this direct connection, but he was mistaken. It wasn't the right time for such a direct connection. Moshe understood this, knowing that the sound of the Shofar during Matan Torah had been concealed. Instead, Mitzvot served as the means to connect with Hashem. (Based on the Imrei Emes)

The sons of Korach accepted Moshe's leadership over their father's. In this chapter of Tehillim, "And it will be on that day the great Shofar will blow," they acknowledge that the complete revelation of Hashem has not yet occurred. They recognized Moshe's correctness and their father's error.

## **Significance of Reciting Psalm 47 Seven Times**

The Ariz"l instituted the recitation of this Tehillim chapter before blowing the Shofar on Rosh Hashanah. It encapsulates what we aim to achieve through the Shofar - the restoration of the world to the complete revelation desired by Korach.

The Yesod V'shoresh Havoda further explains the significance of reciting this chapter seven times. The name Elokim appears seven times in the chapter, meaning we utter the Name forty-nine times. This Name represents nature, where Hashem's presence is concealed. There are forty-nine levels of concealment until Hashem's presence is fully revealed in the world. The Shofar's sound during Rosh Hashanah aims to achieve this revelation.

## Impact of Revelation

The Yalkut Shimoni on this chapter in Tehillim describes an incident that highlights the impact of this revelation. The Romans once decreed the eradication of all Jews within thirty days. According to Roman law, if one of the electors involved in passing a law died, the law was annulled. One of the electors planning to convert took his own life, thereby annulling the decree. He swallowed a coin (madbea), representing nature (teva), to signify that the forty-nine levels of nature could not destroy Klal Yisrael.

This incident is recounted in the verse from this chapter in Tehillim, “The generous of the nation gathered together.” It is part of the recitation of this chapter, reminding us of such incidents that will bring about the complete goal for the world.

## The Pesukim After Shofar

After the Tekios the Baal Tokea begins Ashrei. But in most shuls, he first says three Pesukim.

First, he says, “Fortunate is the nation that knows Your Teruah’. That is based on the Midrash that the Klal Yisrael knows how to entice Hashem with their Teruah, and He arises from the throne of judgement to that of mercy.

Then we say two more Pesukim. Those include the three foundational beliefs. The belief in Hashem; that He oversees and controls the entire world; and that He gave us the Torah. Those are parallel to Malchiyus, Zichronos, and the Shofar of Matan Torah.

## Musaf

### מלכיות זכרונות שופרות

The Gemara emphasizes that one of the central themes of Rosh Hashanah is encapsulated in the following statement: 'Say before Me My Sovereignty, so that you may coronate Me; My Memories of you, so that I may remember you for good. And accomplish this through the blowing of the Shofar.'

In our Tefila, we express these sentiments during the Musaf prayer of Rosh Hashanah, a Tefila that distinguishes this Yom Tov from others. Unlike the standard seven brachos recited on other Yomim Tovim, the Rosh Hashanah Musaf contains nine brachos. The middle three brachos are known as Malchiyus (Kingship), Zichronos (Remembrances), and Shofaros (Shofar blasts). Within each of these brachos, we reference ten verses: three from each section of the Tanach—Torah, Nevi'im, and Kesuvim—as well as a final Pasuk from the Torah.

The Yesod VShoresh HaAvodah, a foundational work on Jewish prayer, provides a practical approach to internalizing these concepts during Musaf.

- **Malchiyus (Kingship):** In this bracha, focus on the idea that Hashem has chosen both the Jewish people as a whole and you as an individual to manifest His dominion over the world. Accept this responsibility willingly, recognizing that generations before you have demonstrated unwavering commitment to this cause, often with the greatest personal sacrifice. Channel your own determination to carry this legacy forward.

- **Zichronos (Remembrances):** During this bracha, contemplate the notion that Hashem remembers all your deeds and is currently weighing them. Reflect on the collective memory of Klal Yisrael, remembering their commitment as exemplified by the Akeida and their trustful journey through the desert. In doing so, consider Hashem's promise to ultimately redeem His people, an assurance rooted in His remembrance of this unwavering loyalty.
- **Shofaros (Shofar blasts):** In this bracha, direct your thoughts towards Hashem's remembrance of the Shofar blasts that accompanied the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Recall how the entire nation bore witness to the Shechina. As you reflect on the current state of affairs and the longing for the arrival of Mashiach, consider the question of how long Hashem's Name has been desecrated and unrecognized in the world. And think about your desire for the revelation of that same presence of Hashem as by Matan Torah.

By internalizing these profound themes during the Musaf brachos, you can experience a deeper connection to the essence of Rosh Hashanah and its significance.

### **Bowing During Aleinu**

One of the central themes of the Aleinu prayer revolves around the contrast between its first and second paragraphs. The initial paragraph emphasizes Klal Yisrael's wholehearted acceptance of Hashem's sovereignty, while the second paragraph centers on our hope that the rest of the world will eventually come to this realization.

On Rosh Hashanah, apart from individual judgment, another crucial aspect of judgment takes place. This aspect is described as a trial, a celestial courtroom showdown between Klal Yisrael and the angels representing the nations. This trial presents a stark confrontation between two parties: the angels of the nations acting as prosecuting attorneys, contending that Klal Yisrael is undeserving of Hashem's mercy. They argue that we have not fulfilled our responsibilities and thus are not worthy of divine compassion. So, how do we respond to this challenging accusation?

Aleinu serves as our response. During the Musaf service on Rosh Hashanah, we recite Aleinu, a prayer in which we draw a clear distinction between ourselves and others. It is not merely spoken; we physically prostrate ourselves in complete subservience to Hashem. This profound act represents our answer to the accusations of those celestial prosecutors. We proclaim our acceptance of Hashem's kingship and assert that we do deserve to be found innocent on Rosh Hashanah.

## After Shul

### Staying Awake the First Day

The Yerushalmi says that one who sleeps on Rosh Hashanah, his Mazal will be asleep. This is referring to the malach who is your defense attorney. If you sleep, then what energy does he have to defend you? Therefore, many people stay awake all afternoon.

But if you are not sleeping, what should you do?

Just sitting around or doing non-productive activities is the equivalent of sleeping. One should say Tehillim and learn Torah. But if by staying awake one will be tired and unable to daven then it is better to sleep.

### Tehillim and Learning

There is a minhag to say (the entire) Tehillim twice over Rosh Hashanah. The gematria of Kaper – atone is three hundred, twice the number of chapters of Tehilim. But as always a lesser amount with kavana is better than a lot rushed through.

R Elchonon Wasserman and the Brisker Rav would both say Tehillim rather than learn, each one for his own reason.

R Elchonon felt that to stand out and learn as the great Rosh Yeshiva on Rosh Hashanah was to call attention to oneself and not correct. At a time of judgment, one wants to be part of the general community, not stand out. That is what the woman of Shunam said to Elisha, I do not want anything from the King's house, let me be part of the nation. Klal Yisrael will receive a good verdict, better to be part of the Klal.

The Brisker Rav said that during learning one can start to think about other things and stop concentrating on ruchniyus. When saying Tehillim it was easier to concentrate continuously.

But one who connects with learning, it is definitely correct, especially learning that has to do with the ideas of Rosh Hashanah.

There are those who say that based on this, you need to get up as soon as the day begins. But Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach ZT"l said that the words of the Yerushalmi say one who goes back to sleep. Till you get up that does not apply. (There is a minhag to daven vasikin on Rosh Hashana.)

R Chaim Kanievsky said that you do not need to wake someone who drowsed off while saying Tehillim or learning. It is not a problem since you are not 'going' to sleep.

### The Approach of the ARIZ"l

The ARIZ"l had a different approach. He said that after davening and shofar the Mazal of the defense attorney is awake. Therefore, in the afternoon one can sleep. Even on Shabbos when we do not blow Shofar the Kedusha of Shabbos is in place of the Shofar, and after davening one can sleep.

## The Second Day

However, it is generally accepted that this idea is for the first day, but on the second day this does not apply. Obviously, one should use the time wisely, but according to most opinions the specific injunction of the Yerushalmi does not apply.

## Tashlich

Tashlich is a minhag already mentioned in the Rishonim. The ARIZ"l introduced it into his minhagim of tefila. It is followed by almost all Kehilos. (The Teimanim do not.) You go to a body of water and recite the last three Pesukim of Micha. The Zohar explains that these are another variation of the Thirteen Midos of Rachamim. Other Pesukim, Tehilim, and Tefilos are added, each according to their minhag.

It is done on the afternoon of the first day of Rosh Hashana. If that is Shabbos, some delay it till the second day. If for some reason it cannot be done, it can be done till Hoshanah Rabba, although, it is better to do it before Yom Kippur.

It is best done by a river where there are fish, but it can be done by any body of water, or even a fish tank or a running faucet.

The Sefarim emphasize that it should be done in a serious way, and not become a pleasure walk.

But why do we do Tashlich by a river? And why is there a Minhag to try to find a place with fish?

## By water

The ninth of the midos in Micha is, "And let all our sins be cast into the depths of the sea." That is the most basic reason to do it by a body of water. But there are other symbolismisms to think about.

One of the main themes of Rosh Hashanah is the akeida. The zechus of the akeida is inherent in the shofar and the Torah reading is the akeida. The midrash says<sup>3</sup> that the Satan did whatever he could to keep Avrohom from reaching the akeida. On the way to the akeida, Avrohom had to cross a river. The Satan raised the waters of the river so that Avrohom would be unable to cross it. Avrohom lifted his eyes to HKB"H and beseeched Him to enable him to cross the river. We go to the river to remember that zechus.

The second, we learn in the beginning of sefer Melachim the correct place to anoint a king is at a river. Since today is the coronation of the King, we coronate Hashem at a river.

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<sup>3</sup> מדרש תנחומא וירא - פרק כב  
כיון שראה שלא קבלו ממנו הלך ונעשה לפניו נהר גדול מיד ירד אברהם לתוך המים והגיעו עד ברכיו אמר לנעריו בואו אחרי ירדו אחריי כיון שהגיעו עד חצי הנהר הגיע המים עד צוארו באותה שעה תלה אברהם עיניו לשמים אמר לפניו רבש"ע בחרתני הודרתני ונגלית לי ואמרת לי אני יחיד ואתה יחיד על ידך יודע שמי בעולמי והעלה יצחק בנך לפני לעולה ולא עכבתי והריני עוסק בצוויך ועכשיו באו מים עד נפש אם אני או יצחק בני טובע מי יקיים מאמרך על מי יתייחד שמך א"ל הקב"ה חייך שעל ידך יתייחד שמי בעולם מיד גער הקב"ה את המעין ויבש הנהר ועמדו ביבשה

The third, we learn in sefer Shmuel that pouring water is a sign of teshuva. We symbolize teshuva by going to a source of water.

## **Fish**

There is also a minhag to find a body of water with fish. Why? Fish also do not have eyelids. Therefore, it appears as if they do not sleep. The Pasuk says that the guardian of Yisrael neither sleeps nor slumbers. On Rosh Hashanah we want to arouse that zechus.

Also, the Pasuk in Koheles describes fish as caught in a snare. On Rosh Hashanah we are also before the court for life or death, and want to be released from that trap. And fish are a siman of fruitfulness. We again mention that zechus and siman, like on Rosh Hashanah night.

## **The Changes for Shabbos Rosh Hashanah The Missing Shofar**

When Rosh Hashanah is on Shabbos we do not blow Shofar. Since everyone is obligated to hear the Shofar, Chazal were concerned that someone might forget and carry the Shofar on Shabbos.

But the Shofar is such a key part of our defense on Rosh Hashanah, why did Chazal abrogate the Shofar because of such a distant possible Chilul Shabbos? Wouldn't all the malachim created by the Shofar outweigh the one or two times someone might mistakenly transgress?

But if we as Klal Yisrael are willing to forego such a defense attorney because of our concern of an inadvertent aveira, that is the greatest defense of all. If the Shofar is to remind us of the Akeida, the willingness to be moser nefesh, the mesiras nefesh of not blowing shofar on Shabbos is itself an akeida and a Shofar. I am willing to have a spiritual mesiras nefesh and give up spiritual reward to not sin.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the Shofar is to bring us to Yiras Shamayim. But if because of my fear to possibly carry the Shofar on Shabbos that is the greatest Yiras Shamayim of all. And when Klal Yisrael has this fear then the malachim of the nations are afraid of them.

## **Requests on Shabbos**

In general, we do not make requests for physical needs on any Shabbos. That is why the thirteen middle Brachos of Shemoneh Esreh are removed and instead we say one bracha about the greatness of Shabbos. Even when you say the Mi Sheberach for sick people on Shabbos you add, "It is Shabbos and we do not cry out". There are remnants of requests such as the last half of birchas hamazon, but that is since the form of the bracha was such, we do not change it.

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<sup>4</sup> משך חכמה על ויקרא פרק כג פסוק כד - וכיון שכן הרי זה גופלי מה שאין אנו תוקעים בראש השנה שחל בשבת זה גופלי עקדה רוחנית מופלגת ומועיל לרצות אותנו, כמו שמרצה זכרון שופר

On Shabbos Rosh Hashanah we make many requests. All the additions to Shemoneh Esreh are filled with requests. We do not skip any of them.

Even private requests can be said at the end of Shemoneh Esreh. The poskim say since these are days of judgment requests are permitted, both spiritual ones and physical ones.

But we do not say Avinu Malkeinu. That is different since it was originally instituted to be said on public fast days it is not said. (at least by Bnei Ashkenaz). But the other requests found in the piyyutim are said since that is considered the form of the bracha. This was also the minhag of the Chazon Ish.

### **The Power of Davening Alone**

**(Reb. Rachel Rudman)**

The Torah commands us:

ספר דברים פרק י(ב) ועתה ישראל מה יהוה אלהיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה את יהוה אלהיך  
ללכת בכל דרכיו ולהתקבץ אתו ולעבד את יהוה אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך:

“And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem ask of you? To fear Hashem your G-d, to follow in His ways, to love Him, to serve Hashem your G-d with all your heart and all your soul.”

Rav Nesanel Quinn, ztz”l , Menahel in Mesivta Torah Vodaas, would emphasize the word \_”ViAta”- “and NOW” -in this pasuk. Throughout our lives, we always have to think, at this moment and stage in my life, what does Hashem ask of me? How can I fear Hashem, follow in His ways love Him and serve Him? There are times where a medical professional , volunteer, someone ill and unable to go to shul, or a mother of young children might not have the ability to daven more than a very short davening, if at all. Or a mother might have time but since she was up all night with a sick child, she desperately needs sleep so she goes to take a nap and misses davening. If that is what she needs to do in order to preserve her physical and emotional health, that might be what Hashem is asking of her now. That doesn’t mean that if she is able, she shouldn’t push herself to stay connected to tefillah. But we might need to get different Halachic guidance when circumstances change in order to find out how to fulfill our command of “Viata Yisrael.”

On Rosh Hashana, we begin our year with coronating our King. Throughout the tefilla we allude to our Melech. During Mussaf we have the powerful section of Malchiyos that begins with Aleinu lishabeiach LaAdon hakol, and we blow shofar which is a means of coronating our King . By definition, if Hashem is our King, we are His servants. A servant dutifully accepts whatever assignment the King directs him to do, even if at times he wishes he were given what he perceives as a more prestigious position in the palace of the king.

I will never forget the first Rosh Hashanah after I was zocheh to become a mother. I was grateful for this blessing in my life, I had davened to be in this position, and very much longed to be in this position. And yet, if I will be honest with my feelings, I will share with you, that as my husband said good yuntif and left to go to shul, I closed the door and blinked back tears. I thought to myself, “How can I not go to shul on Yamim Noraim?! Instead of hearing the beautiful niggunim for היום, הכל מאמינים, הרת עולם ונתה תוקף, I am going to stay home and nurse a baby and change diapers?! I had to process this transition in life. Chazal tell us; כל התחלות קשות - all beginnings are difficult. There are many transitions in life—and כל;---all of them can be challenging. Those words reminded me that every new stage in life can be an

adjustment. It is okay if it takes time to digest and really feel that “different” doesn’t mean wrong, and that “ different” can also be wonderful.

I will share with you what I eventually did that evening and continued to do for the many years to come, as I was blessed with many more years of being home with young children . I had been a big shul go-er, davening in a big shul with a chazzan and choir and a (very) long davening. There were lots of niggunim that will always be in my head from my childhood. I took my 3 month old beautiful daughter, sat down with her and my machzor in my rocking chair and I began to sing my way through the beautiful tefillos of Rosh Hashahah. I was not going to hear the niggunim in the shul this year( and for many years to come) , but I was going to hear them in my home. My children grew up hearing those niggunim and feeling the awe of Rosh Hashahah in our home. The job description for being an eved Hashem those wonderful years of motherhood was different than the first 20 years of my life. Different, and very beautiful.

Thank you, Hashem, for the wonderful zchus of raising loyal members of Your kingdom.