The Weekly Shiur of Maran HaRishon LeTzion HaGaon Rabbi David Yosef shlit"a from Motzaei Shabbat Parashat Ki Tetzei 5786, Shiur #365

English

Parashat Ki Tavo

Conduct During the Days of Rosh Hashanah

Shiur Topics: Fasting on Rosh Hashanah | Rosh Hashanah is a Day of Joy | Crying on Rosh Hashanah | "And Rejoice with Trembling" | Crying from Sorrow versus Crying from Emotion | Crowning the King -- Accepting the Yoke of His Kingship | Why We Do Not Recite Viduy on Rosh Hashanah | Personal Requests on Rosh Hashanah | What to Request on Rosh Hashanah

From the Introductory Remarks of HaGaon Rabbi Erez Elcharar shlit"a, Chief Rabbi of Hod HaSharon and Rosh Kollel of Yechaveh Daat:

"...With the permission of *Morenu ve'rabbenu, Ateret roshenu*, Maran HaRishon LeTzion, may Hashem grant him long and pleasant life, and give him strength and Divine assistance to continue bringing merit to the public, Amen. Rabbenu Yonah writes in *Sha'arei Teshuvah*: 'Know that a created being is obligated to be a faithful envoy and a wise servant in all the work of his Master's service.' What is an envoy (*tzir*)? To be a messenger. 'And the faithful worker will be swift in his work and watch over the work of his fellow workers' – a person who truly cares about the owner does not merely work himself; he also ensures that others serve the owner properly. If he sees others slacking, he ensures they work well. 'And his eyes are upon their ways to see if they act with faith, warning them and informing them of the deed they should do, for his desire and will is that his Master's work be done without deceit' – I care about the owner; the owner invests in us, gives to us, does for us, and I want him to succeed. I do not want him to be robbed; I want the merchandise to be good. Rabbenu Yonah says that it is written in the verse, 'Cursed is he who does not uphold' – an individual who studied, repeated, and taught others, and fulfilled the Torah, yet had the power to support the hands of those who engage in Torah and mitzvot and did not support them, falls under the category of cursed! A person who has the ability to influence others and does not care – now it is the month of Elul, hearts are open, every evening there are *Selichot* gatherings throughout the country with hundreds and thousands in every single city: secular individuals, those far from observance, young men aged 15, 16, 17, we see this every day. Who are these young men? The *Ohr HaChayim* says that they are 'holy sheep' – they are holy! They simply did not know; no one taught them! The responsibility is ours, to draw them near and teach them. Establish another shiur, host a home study group, invite friends, draw people near – hearts are open. Rabbenu Bechaye says that if we do not do this, we are considered 'those who cause the public to sin.' Am I one who causes the public to sin?! G-d forbid! I am a *kollel* scholar, but if you have the ability to influence and you do not influence, you are causing the public to sin! We all want to be inscribed for a good life and for peace. Rosh Hashanah is in three weeks; what we must do is go out and act, and with Hashem's help, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* will give us Divine assistance. We see Maran shlit"a, for decades, even as a young man, going out and acting, and he has merited to draw near and teach thousands and tens of thousands! Thank Hashem, we follow in the path of Maran Rabbenu Ovadia Yosef zt"l, whose entire life was dedicated to teaching Torah to the Jewish people. May it be His will that with Hashem's help, we merit Divine assistance to draw our brethren, the Jewish people, closer to their Father in Heaven, and together we will merit the redemption very soon. Amen.

Shiur of Maran HaRishon LeTzion shlit"a

Introduction

A warm blessing of *yashar koach* to my beloved friend, the outstanding scholar, HaGaon Rabbi Erez Elcharar shlit"a, Chief Rabbi of Hod HaSharon. This is an opportunity to congratulate him with a *mazal tov* on the occasion of his official installation (*hachtarah*) that took place this week, which was a magnificent gathering and a *kiddush Hashem*. I am very pleased that HaGaon Rabbi Erez Elcharar is specifically in Hod HaSharon. Unfortunately, this city is not known as a religious or even a traditional city. Regrettably, there are almost no purely holy institutions of Torah and fear of Heaven there; there are no yeshivot and very few *kollelim*. In such a city, it is very fitting to have a great Torah scholar. We do not forfeit having a great Torah scholar in any city; every city must have a halachic authority (*moreh hora'ah*) of the highest caliber. Baruch Hashem, HaGaon Rabbi Erez Elcharar has been with us for many years – over twenty years. He started as an *avrech*, later became a *Rosh Kollel*, and was essentially the director of all the *kollelim* here at the Bet HaMidrash Yechaveh Daat. We parted with him with great sadness; it was not easy for us that he would no longer be here with us continuously. He still visits occasionally, but I believe it is a great matter that a rabbi with such eloquent speech and pleasant demeanor, who knows how to speak to young people at eye level, should serve in the city of Hod HaSharon. *Baruch Hashem*, he has already been active there for many years. At the installation, I looked at the audience and saw the fruits of his wonderful work in that city. With Hashem's help, may he continue to draw hearts near, accomplish great things, spread his wellsprings outward, magnify Torah, and make it glorious. May he derive much pride from all his descendants, Amen.

I visited Eilat this week for the installation of HaGaon Rabbi Yair Hedaya shlit"a as the Chief Rabbi of Eilat. After the ceremony, I was informed that in several places throughout Eilat, *Selichot* are recited at *chatzot*. I went to one synagogue – an Ashkenazi Chabad synagogue led by Rabbi Yosef Hecht shlit"a, the Chief Rabbi of Eilat – and I could hardly believe my eyes. Hundreds of young men and women filled the synagogue to capacity. Inside the synagogue were only young men, while outside stood hundreds of young women. This was not a *Bet Yaakov* crowd... Yet they came at 12:30 AM and stayed until 1:45 AM to hear *Selichot* and inspiring words of *mussar* before *Selichot*. It was an extraordinary sight beyond words! I was told this was not an isolated location, but one of several such places in Eilat. This shows that while a new generation of youth has unfortunately been raised without formal Jewish education, it simply does not satisfy them! There is a deep thirst and a strong desire among our youth, among the younger generation, to know what Torah and mitzvot are, to connect to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, and to recite *Selichot* in the month of Elul.

With Hashem's help, may you merit in Hod HaSharon to magnify Torah and make it glorious. I also wish to congratulate you on your new book, *Arzei HaLevanon*, which you published. May you continue to ascend higher and higher, spread your wellsprings outward, and magnify Torah and make it glorious, Amen.

Fasting on Rosh Hashanah

Today we will discuss our proper conduct on Rosh Hashanah. First, is it permitted to fast on Rosh Hashanah? This is a topic of discussion among the Geonim and *Rishonim*. The conclusion, as ruled in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C.* 597:1), is: "One eats, drinks, and rejoices, and one does not fast on Rosh Hashanah nor on Shabbat Shuvah. However, they should not eat to full satiety, so that they do not act lightheadedly, and the fear of Hashem shall be upon their faces." Regarding a fast over a bad dream (*ta'anit chalom*) on Shabbat, I wrote about this at length in *Halachah Berurah* (*Shabbat*, vol. 18, *Siman* 288), where I elaborated on the entire topic of a *ta'anit chalom* on Shabbat or a fast of repentance (*ta'anit teshuvah*), and the like. In practice, it must be added that on Rosh Hashanah, not only does the *Shulchan Aruch* state that one does not fast, but fasting is actually considered a negative thing. If a person fasts on Rosh Hashanah, it might result in a situation where he will have to fast every year of his life on Rosh Hashanah! Maran the *Shulchan Aruch* addresses this topic, stating: "One who fasts once on Rosh Hashanah due to a *ta'anit chalom* – if it occurred on the first day, he must fast both days for the rest of his life. If it occurred on the second day, he fasts only the second day for the rest of his life." Why should anyone get entangled in such a complication?! Furthermore, there is a halachic question whether an annulment of vows (*hatarat nedarim*) is effective for this, as many *poskim* hold that even an annulment does not help. This is a very difficult matter.

Maran's Dream That Was Fulfilled

I remember over thirty years ago, I spent Rosh Hashanah with my father, Maran zt"l. On Rosh Hashanah, he would pray at six in the morning. At that time, Daylight Saving Time was not observed, so six in the morning was very early, but he always woke up before dawn (*alot hashachar*). That year, he did not wake up on time and remained asleep. I entered his bedroom and saw him sleeping, but while asleep, he was weeping bitterly. I was deeply alarmed and said, "Father, Father, what happened? What happened?" He opened his eyes and told me he had seen a dream that his dear friend, HaGaon Rabbi Yosef Ades zt"l, had passed away. Rabbi Yosef was a *ram* (senior yeshiva lecturer) at Porat Yosef, a great Kabbalist, and a righteous man of world stature. He was somewhat younger than my father and had studied with Maran zt"l at Porat Yosef. Maran dreamed that he had passed away and that he was eulogizing him at the funeral, and Maran was deeply shaken by this. Maran zt"l then debated whether he should fast a *ta'anit chalom*. It was a very difficult dream! Although there is a discussion among the *poskim* regarding someone who sees a dream about his friend dying – who needs to fast, the dreamer or the friend dreamed about? I wrote about this in *Halachah Berurah* (*ibid.*, *se'if* 26) as to whether the dreamer must inform his friend that he needs to fast. It is not simple at all. Moreover, it was impossible to go and inform Rabbi Yosef Ades on Rosh Hashanah. Maran zt"l decided that he could not fast, because if he fasted, he would be required to fast on Rosh Hashanah for the rest of his life – which is impossible. Therefore, he did not fast. However, he remained in great distress throughout Rosh Hashanah because of that dream. Immediately after Rosh Hashanah, on *Motzaei Chag*, he sent me to inquire about the health of HaGaon Rabbi Yosef Ades, and he was told that, thank Hashem, everything was fine. Yet he did not feel fully at ease. Tragically, on the night of Hoshanah Rabbah, the funeral of HaGaon Rabbi Yosef Ades zt"l took place. He had seen a dream that unfortunately came true. When he attended the funeral, I remember he was unable to deliver a eulogy due to his immense pain and sorrow over having foreseen it in his dream.

Rosh Hashanah is a Day of Joy

Rosh Hashanah is such a special *Yom Tov*; one eats, drinks, and rejoices on Rosh Hashanah. On the other hand, it is the Day of Judgment (*Yom HaDin*). What is the underlying principle that it is the Day of Judgment, yet we nevertheless eat, drink, and rejoice? The Geonim and *Rishonim* who wrote this relied on explicit verses in the Book of *Nechemiah* (Chapter 8). There, the Jewish people are described as returning from the Babylonian exile toward the building of the Second *Bet HaMikdash*. At that time, they were unlearned in Torah (*amei ha'aretz*) and did not know how to observe the mitzvot properly. They received rebuke and guidance regarding what it means to serve *HaKadosh Baruch Hu,* and the verse states (8:9) that they were mourning and weeping intensely on Rosh Hashanah over the destruction of the Bet HaMikdash. *Nechemiah* then said to them (8:10): "Do not mourn and do not weep," adding, "Go, eat rich foods, drink sweet drinks, and send portions to those who have nothing prepared, for the day is holy to our Master. Do not be sad, for the joy of Hashem is your strength. And all the people went to eat, drink, send portions, and make great joy, for they understood the words that were made known to them." They had begun to cry, but *Nechemiah* told them that it is a *Yom Tov*: "The joy of Hashem is your strength, for the day is holy to our Master" – do not cry! From this, the Geonim and *Rishonim* derived that Rosh Hashanah is a day of joy: one eats, drinks, and rejoices, and so rules the *Shulchan Aruch* (*O.C.* 597:1).

Crying on Rosh Hashanah

My father, Maran zt"l, in *Yechaveh Daat* (2:69; see also *Yabia Omer*, vol. 9, *O.C.* 51), addresses a very interesting question: When praying on Rosh Hashanah, is one permitted to cry or not? Since on one hand it is a day of joy, while on the other hand it is a Day of Judgment, perhaps it is improper to cry on Rosh Hashanah. What is the correct approach? He cites all the *poskim* on this topic, noting that Rosh Hashanah is considered a *Yom Tov*, and the halachic conclusion is that one eats, drinks, and rejoices. Based on this, he writes that one should ostensibly not cry on Rosh Hashanah, as *Nechemiah* explicitly told the people, "Do not mourn and do not weep"; it is not a time for crying. On the other hand, he cites the Arizal, whose student Rabbi Chaim Vital testified (*Sha'ar HaKavanot*, p. 90a; *Pri Etz Chaim*, *Sha'ar* 26, ch. 5) that the Arizal would weep profusely during the prayers of Rosh Hashanah. The Arizal even stated that if a person does not experience crying during these days, it indicates – pay attention to these harsh words – that his soul is not complete and proper; there is a flaw in his soul. A complete and proper soul ought to cry on Rosh Hashanah! Maran zt"l explains the resolution: Indeed, it is a day of joy, and one must rejoice. However, while praying, a person may naturally be moved to tears. He begins to pray, reciting the special additions for the Rosh Hashanah prayers: "And so, place Your dread, Hashem our G-d, upon all Your works..." He feels awe of the Day of Judgment, and he begins to cry. When crying arises spontaneously from within himself, he should not suppress it. It is commendable for him to cry, and this is what the Arizal meant. However, artificially forcing oneself to cry – when it does not come naturally, yet making deliberate efforts to weep – is improper. I recall that Maran zt"l himself would cry on Rosh Hashanah. He served as the *chazzan*, and during his prayers, his voice would frequently break, and he would weep, particularly during the *Mussaf* prayer. As much as he attempted to pray swiftly, his voice would often break, and he would cry during the prayer. According to the principle he formulated, if a person is spontaneously moved to tears, it is very fitting.

The Proof from the Chida

Many years ago, when I wrote my book *Torat HaMoadim*, I approached Maran zt"l and suggested that his resolution required further examination. While the Arizal's words could be explained as referring to spontaneous crying, it is clear that the Chida – who was a great Kabbalist and followed the Arizal – did not understand the Arizal in that manner. The same appears in other Kabbalistic works and in the *Sdei Chemed* (*Asifat Dinim, Ma'arechet Rosh Hashanah*), where it is stated that a person should make every effort to arouse himself to weep, for it is unthinkable for a person not to cry on Rosh Hashanah. The Chida brings a Radvaz (3:985), who writes regarding a person whose son passed away, G-d forbid, and he does not cry: the *Radvaz* writes that a person who does not cry when his child passes away demonstrates a flaw in his soul. I remember once when Rafael Eitan ("Raful"), whose son was killed in action, received the news, people related with amazement how from the moment he was told until the funeral, he did not shed a single tear; he did not cry. However, we do not view this with admiration. On the contrary, how can this be?! You are a human being; do you have a heart of stone?! You do not cry over your son?! The Radvaz writes, however, that if this person has an eye condition, and the doctor warned him that crying is dangerous for his eyes – as the Gemara (*Shabbat* 151b) notes that excessive crying poses a danger to vision – and his child passes away, and he strongly desires to cry but restrains himself with great effort for health reasons, the *Radvaz* states that this is acceptable and does not indicate a flaw in his soul. The Chida writes that based on this, the same principle applies to Rosh Hashanah: If a person has an eye condition and restrains himself from crying on Rosh Hashanah to avoid damaging his eyes – meaning a person who naturally desires to cry but holds himself back for health reasons – this is permitted. We see from the Chida that holding oneself back is permitted only for a medical reason; otherwise, one ought to cry on Rosh Hashanah. Similarly, HaGaon Rabbi Chaim Palagi writes (*Moed LeChol Chai* 13:10) that one who does not cry on Rosh Hashanah should at least make a weeping sound, as stated in the verse (*Tehillim* 6:9): "For Hashem has heard the voice of my weeping." David HaMelech says, Hashem heard the *voice* of my weeping – at the very least, a weeping sound. All of this appears to contradict Maran zt"l's view that one should cry only if moved spontaneously, whereas the Chida indicates that one must actively arouse and exert oneself to cry.

The Reason We Do Not Follow the Chida

When I asked my father and teacher this question, he replied: "You are correct that the Chida implies one must actively cry, and Rabbi Chaim Vital's recording of the Arizal could be interpreted either way. However, the explicit verses in the Book of *Nechemiah* clearly state otherwise – that on Rosh Hashanah one must neither weep nor mourn, meaning it is a day of joy rather than a day of weeping. Therefore, when we have explicit biblical verses emphasizing how essential it is to rejoice on Rosh Hashanah, we must conclude that the holy Arizal also did not intend for a person to force himself to weep, but rather referred to weeping that

arises spontaneously, even though the Chida wrote differently."

Crying from Sorrow versus Crying from Emotion

In truth, I believe there is another way to reconcile the apparent contradiction between the Arizal's words and the biblical verses. In *Nechemiah*, the people were not weeping out of awe of the Day of Judgment; the verse states, "Do not mourn" – meaning they were mourning on Rosh Hashanah, crushed by the thought that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* was angry with them for their sins. Their weeping was born of grief and distress, transforming Rosh Hashanah into something akin to Tisha B'Av. Regarding this, Nechemiah told them that it is a *Yom Tov*, and sadness is forbidden on a *Yom Tov*. There is a fundamental difference between weeping caused by mourning and sorrow, and weeping stemming from deep emotion. When a person prays with intense feeling, standing before the Creator of the universe, he is moved: "You remember the deeds of the world and consider all creatures from ancient times; before You all secrets are revealed and the multitude of hidden things from the beginning" – he is deeply moved! From this intense emotion and the outpouring of his soul before *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, he begins to weep. This is not the weeping described in *Nechemiah*, which was a weeping of grief, like a person whose deceased relative lies before him. On *Yom Tov*, we are commanded to rejoice. On the other hand, while engaged in prayer, we weep from profound emotion; yet while eating, who would ever weep during a meal?!

"And Rejoice with Trembling"

On the other hand, one must maintain seriousness even during meals. I recall that during the Rosh Hashanah festive meals, my father, Maran zt"l, had a recurring statement. He would observe us eating and drinking, while he himself maintained a solemn, serious demeanor. If anyone began to joke or laugh lightheartedly, he would immediately quote: "'And rejoice with trembling' (*Tehillim* 2:11) – where there is joy, there must also be trembling from the awe of judgment!" One could clearly see upon him the gravity of the Day of Judgment. However, during prayer, which is a time of spiritual outpouring, emotional depth, and fervent devotion, a person should pay close attention rather than rushing through the words without thought. Anyone who truly contemplates the meaning of the Rosh Hashanah prayers will find it almost impossible not to weep. We must arouse ourselves to reflect upon the words we recite, which will naturally lead us to tears on Rosh Hashanah.

The Dual Nature of Rosh Hashanah

As we can see, the nature of Rosh Hashanah is complex and seemingly paradoxical. On one hand, we are instructed: Rejoice, eat, drink, "for the joy of Hashem is your strength, and the people went to eat, drink, and make great joy." On the other hand, we are expected to weep! What is required of us? Is it a day of joy or a day of solemn awe?

The Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 32b) relates that the ministering angels asked *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*: "Master of the universe, if it is a day of joy, why do the Jewish people not recite *Hallel* before You on this day?" Indeed, the halachah is established (*Shulchan Aruch, O.C.* 584:1) that *Hallel* is not recited on Rosh Hashanah. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* answered them: "The books of life and the books of death are open before Me, and shall the Jewish people recite songs of praise?!" How can one sing *Hallel* on a day when a person is judged for life or death? Yet, on the other hand, we are commanded to rejoice – how do we harmonize this dual nature?

Why We Do Not Recite Viduy on Rosh Hashanah

Furthermore, Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgment for life and death, as *Chazal* state in the Mishnah (*Rosh Hashanah* 18a): "All inhabitants of the world pass before Him like *benei maron*" – the Gemara explains various interpretations of *benei maron*, all meaning that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* judges each individual one by one. Everyone is scrutinized in a single glance as He passes each person before Him, judging all human beings. Ostensibly, the most appropriate way to merit a favorable judgment – rather than sitting down to eat a ram's head, black-eyed peas (*lubia*), and various symbolic foods (*simanim*) – would be to at least incorporate a proper confession (*viduy*) into our prayers. There is a vast distinction between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur is a day of forgiveness: "For on this day He shall atone for you, to cleanse you," and *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* commands us, "And you shall afflict your souls," and we fast. It is logical that on a day when we seek forgiveness, we do so through fasting – approaching as a pauper, needy and humble, abstaining from food and drink, and weeping before *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. Yet on Rosh Hashanah, not only do we eat and drink, but we explicitly abstain from reciting *viduy* in the Rosh Hashanah prayers. We make no mention of sin or iniquity. There is significant debate among the *Rishonim* whether to recite *Avinu Malkenu*, and even those who follow the custom to recite *Avinu Malkenu* omit the lines: "We have sinned before You," "Pardon and forgive all our iniquities," and "Erase and remove our transgressions from before Your eyes." We deliberately refrain from confessing on Rosh Hashanah. On Yom Kippur, even before the final meal before the fast (*seudah mafseket*), we recite *viduy*, and throughout the day we confess, weep, and express sorrow over our sins. How is it that on Rosh Hashanah – the Day of Judgment when "creatures are remembered for life or death" – our prayers contain no explicit act of repentance (*teshuvah*)?

"Recite Before Me Kingship"

The answer is that we must understand the inner essence of Rosh Hashanah. *Chazal* state (*Rosh Hashanah* 34b) that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* said to the Jewish people: "My children, recite before Me *Malchuyot* (Kingship), *Zichronot* (Remembrances), and *Shofarot* (Shofar blasts). *Malchuyot* – so that you crown Me over you. *Zichronot* – so that your remembrance rises favorably before Me. And with what? With the shofar." For this reason, in the *Mussaf* prayer of Rosh Hashanah, our Sages instituted three unique blessings in the middle of the *Amidah*: one for *Malchuyot*, one for *Zichronot*, and one for *Shofarot*. In each blessing, we recite ten specific verses: three from the Torah addressing the Kingship of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, three from *Tehillim*, three from the Prophets (*Nevi'im*), and a tenth verse from the Torah. We conclude the blessing with: "King over all the earth, Who sanctifies Israel and the Day of Remembrance." We see an essential concept: "Recite before Me *Malchuyot* so that you crown Me over you" – Rosh Hashanah is the day of coronation of the King, when we crown *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* over us. Rabbenu Sa'adyah Gaon lists ten reasons for blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah (cited in *Abudraham*, *Seder Tefillot Rosh Hashanah*), one of which is that it is customary to sound trumpets on the day a king is crowned: "With trumpets and the sound of the shofar, blast before the King, Hashem" (*Tehillim* 98:6). Therefore, we sound the shofar on Rosh Hashanah as a decree of the Torah ("A day of shofar sounding it shall be for you"). The Rambam (*Teshuvah* 3:4) provides another dimension: "It contains an allusion: Rouse yourselves, you who are asleep, from your sleep, and you who slumber, arise from your slumber." What do we pray for on Rosh Hashanah? We begin the *Amidah* as usual with *Zochrenu LeChayim* and *Mi Kamocha*. But when we reach the third blessing, *Atah Kadosh*, we add the *Uvechen* paragraphs, all expressing the universal reign of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*: "And so, place Your dread, Hashem our G-d, upon all Your works... and all creatures shall fear You, and all created beings shall bow before You, and they shall all form a single band to do Your will with a whole heart." We continue: "And You, Hashem our G-d, shall reign speedily over all Your works on Mount Zion, the dwelling place of Your glory," and "May every created thing know that You have made it, and every formed thing understand that You have formed it, and everything with the breath of life in its nostrils say: Hashem, the G-d of Israel, is King, and His kingship rules over all." We conclude: "King over all the earth, Who sanctifies Israel and the Day of Remembrance." Everything centers around "The King." Even in the blessings following the *Haftarah*, we add "King over all the earth," and throughout the Ten Days of Repentance (*Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*), we adjust our prayers to conclude with *HaMelech HaKadosh* and *HaMelech HaMishpat*. We pray for *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* to reign over the entire world.

In truth, the Jewish people represent the core focus of creation. Frequently, the Gemara concludes a discussion with the phrase *kuli alma lo pligi* ("the entire world does not dispute this") – who is "the entire world"? It refers to the Jewish people, the Torah scholars who study His word, for whose sake *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* created the universe. Yet here on Rosh Hashanah, our prayers explicitly encompass every human being: "May every created thing know," "May every formed thing understand" – that every person created in the Divine image, Jew or non-Jew, stand and proclaim that Hashem, G-d of Israel, is King. This is why Rosh Hashanah is a day of joy: when a King is crowned, the people gather to rejoice in his honor, rather than sit in mourning and grief. He desires that His subjects celebrate His coronation -- if you love your King, you rejoice that He is your Sovereign!

Accepting the Yoke of His Kingship

On the other hand, when crowning a King – "You shall surely set over yourself a King" – His awe must be upon you. Therefore, we pray: "Place Your dread, Hashem our G-d... Your awe upon all that You created, that all works shall fear You and all creatures bow before You." The coronation of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* carries an immediate consequence: reverent awe and fear before the Almighty. Naturally, when a person experiences reverent awe before *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, he is moved to tears. Knowing that on this day "creatures are remembered for life or death" and that "a King in judgment establishes the earth," we accept His Kingship. The very act of accepting His Kingship constitutes the highest form of *teshuvah*. It supersedes the immediate need for explicit confession (*viduy*) or begging for forgiveness for individual sins. We do not focus on individual sins on Rosh Hashanah because the proper order is first to accept His Kingship, to fortify our faith in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, recognizing that He is the Creator of the universe to Whose word we are bound. Only after establishing this foundation of Kingship do we proceed to examine our actions, reflect upon where we have stumbled, and seek forgiveness. That is the purpose of Yom Kippur – to grant atonement for our sins. The ultimate purpose of Rosh Hashanah is to crown *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, to acquire genuine fear of Heaven and authentic faith (*emunah*). Rosh Hashanah

is a day of faith and acceptance of His Kingship. We were brought into this world to fulfill His will, which subsequently leads us to repent and observe His mitzvot.

This illuminates the words of the Arizal. Eating and drinking on Rosh Hashanah is done to honor the King. Yet when we stand in prayer before *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, we declare our loyalty to Him – a genuine, heartfelt declaration: "King over all the earth, Who sanctifies Israel and the Day of Remembrance." This profound declaration evokes reverent awe before the Creator, which naturally moves a person to tears.

It Is Impossible Not to Cry

Anyone who genuinely contemplates the words of the Rosh Hashanah prayers will find it nearly impossible not to weep. One would need a heart of stone not to be moved to tears on Rosh Hashanah.

To what can this be compared? When Moshe Rabbenu came to Egypt and brought the plagues upon Pharaoh – terrible, devastating plagues that laid waste to Egypt – he brought six plagues: blood, frogs, lice, wild animals, pestilence, and boils. He then warned Pharaoh about the seventh plague: hail. Each time, Moshe announced the coming plague in advance. Though the Egyptians doubted the first plague, they witnessed its fulfillment. Moshe warned of blood, and blood came; he warned of frogs, and frogs came. *Chazal* state that Moshe spent three weeks warning before each plague, followed by a week of the plague itself. When the seventh plague of hail approached, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* told Moshe: "For this time I am sending all My plagues against your heart." Moshe warned Pharaoh: "Now, gather your livestock and all that you have in the field; every man and animal found in the field that is not brought indoors, the hail shall fall upon them and they shall die." Moshe explicitly warned them to go inside.

Imagine if a weather broadcast announced that a severe, destructive storm of hail and rain was coming tomorrow, making it dangerous to step outside; no one would venture outdoors.

I was in the United States several years ago when Hurricane Sandy struck. That storm uprooted massive trees – how great are Your works, Hashem, to witness such power! Shortly before it hit, forecasts suggested it would bypass New York, but suddenly the forecast shifted toward New York. I tried to obtain a ticket to leave, but it was too late; all flights were canceled, and I remained there. I witnessed the breathtaking power of creation as ocean waves flooded entire streets – an astounding sight. Yet the force of that hurricane was nothing compared to the plague of hail in Egypt, where Moshe warned that anyone remaining outdoors would perish. What does the Torah record? "He among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of Hashem made his servants and livestock flee indoors. But he who did not pay attention..." (*Shemot* 9:20-21). How could anyone fail to pay attention?! Could a person be so foolish, after witnessing six devastating plagues, to remain outdoors when explicitly warned of death?! How could someone leave his servants and livestock exposed to destruction?! The verse does not say they disbelieved; it says "he did not pay attention" (*lo sam libo*). This describes a state where a person hardens his heart to such a degree that he simply fails to exercise his intellect. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gave him a mind, yet in that moment, his mind remained unengaged...

The same applies to a person who enters the synagogue on Rosh Hashanah, begins to pray, and recites "Place Your dread, Hashem our G-d," yet instead of contemplating the words he utters, his thoughts wander to the ram's head dipped in honey, the holiday meals, the family gathering, and how enjoyable it will all be... How is that possible?! How can one not weep?! How can one not tremble in awe before the majestic power of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*?! "A King in judgment establishes the earth" – we witness the Kingship of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. How can one pray without profound spiritual awakening?!

"May It Be Your Will" During the Symbolic Foods

Therefore, it is a sacred obligation upon each of us to approach the Rosh Hashanah prayers with the utmost seriousness, contemplating every word we utter and praying with deep concentration (*kavanah*). As noted, tears will flow naturally when we realize the gravity of the day. In truth, when we ask *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* for our various needs, we do so recognizing that despite our shortcomings and sins, He is our loving Father. This may initially seem surprising: We approach Rosh Hashanah burdened with sins, yet rather than spending the day confessing, we make personal requests! We take dates and say: "May it be Your will that our enemies and foes be consumed (*yitammu*)." We take spinach (*selek*) and say: "That our enemies be removed (*yistalleku*)." We take leeks (*karti*) and say: "That our enemies be cut off (*yikkaretu*)." We take pomegranates and say: "That our merits be as numerous as the seeds of a pomegranate." Does eating a few pomegranate seeds automatically fill a person with mitzvot?! What is the meaning behind these symbolic requests (*yehi ratzon*)?

A Son May Request from His Father

To what can this be compared? A worker employed in a household made a careless mistake that resulted in extensive damage throughout the home. The homeowner entered, furious over the destruction of his property. When he confronted the worker, the worker replied: "Sir, I have been reflecting on recent events, and I believe my salary is too low; you should give me a raise." What foolishness! Is that what you have to say at this moment?! You want a raise?! You should be fired, dismissed, and held accountable for the damage. We saw a similar instance when airport workers went on strike, leaving tens of thousands of travelers stranded for ten hours, with young children crying in distress. And what did the workers demand? A raise in pay! Rather than a raise, such conduct warrants a penalty. Ostensibly, our behavior on Rosh Hashanah might seem similar: We come with sins, yet we eat, drink, rejoice, and present a list of requests to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*! However, the key distinction is that we are the children of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. When we approach Him and say: "Father, Master of the Universe, You are our Father and we crown You over us. We fear Heaven and commit ourselves to Your mitzvot. Please, 'inscribe us in the book of sustenance and good livelihood'" – since a person's sustenance is decreed from Rosh Hashanah to Rosh Hashanah, we present our personal needs because we are His children. That is the unique privilege of the Jewish people.

Personal Requests on Rosh Hashanah

On the other hand, one must realize that the essence of Rosh Hashanah is acquiring fear of Heaven, rather than focusing primarily on petty personal requests. It is told that Napoleon, during his military campaign in Russia, was forced into retreat. As Russian soldiers closed in on him, he sought refuge in a small village house. The homeowner recognized Napoleon and chose to hide him, saving his life. After the war concluded, Napoleon summoned the man to express his gratitude: "You performed a extraordinary deed by saving my life. Ask for whatever you desire, and I shall grant it to you!" The villager pondered for a moment and said: "A competitor opened a shop across from mine, hurting my business. Please order him to close his shop..." Napoleon was astonished by the request: "I offer you anything you desire, and you ask to close a competitor's shop?!" Napoleon asked: "Do you have any other request?" The man thought again and said: "Tax collectors assessed me too heavily; perhaps you could grant me a tax reduction..." Napoleon was bewildered by the man's small-mindedness, asking for trivial matters when offered royal bounty, and dismissed him.

Asking for Everything

We too must realize that we are children of the King. We crown *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, the Sovereign of the universe, as our King. We should not approach Him with trivial requests for minor needs alone; we should ask for everything. What does it mean to ask for everything? To pray for Torah, to pray for fear of Heaven, to pray for spiritual growth and Divine service – that we merit to elevate ourselves and fulfill the potential of our divine soul (*neshamah*). We pray that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* grant us Divine assistance to grow in Torah and fear of Heaven. That is the paramount importance of serving Hashem on Rosh Hashanah.

My friends, today I did not focus exclusively on halachah, yet this constitutes halachah in its truest sense. Indeed, it is perhaps the most vital halachah of Rosh Hashanah – how one ought to conduct oneself on this holy day. The Chida writes (*Moreh BaEtzba* 9:250) that one should pray on Rosh Hashanah with a blend of anxious awe and complete trust: anxious awe from the dread of judgment, yet filled with trust in Hashem! Therefore, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* desires that we rejoice, so that we feel uplifted and pray properly, for He desires to inscribe us in the book of good life. He loves us! Even the wicked Bil'am observed (*Bamidbar* 24:1): "And Bil'am saw that it was good in the eyes of Hashem to bless Israel" – *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* loves us and desires our good! That is why we proclaim in our prayers: "You have chosen us from all the nations" – words we recite on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and all the festivals. "You have loved us and favored us, elevated us above all tongues, and sanctified us with Your mitzvot, and Your great and holy Name You have proclaimed upon us." Reflecting upon these profound words illuminates the true essence of Rosh Hashanah. We pray with tears – for it is impossible not to weep on Rosh Hashanah – pouring out our souls before *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, humbly submitting to His Kingship, and recognizing that we are His servants. "If as children – have mercy on us as a father has mercy on his children; if as servants – our eyes look to You." We place our trust in HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and when we conduct ourselves appropriately -- rejoicing in festive meals on one hand, while trembling in awe of judgment on the other – we will merit to be inscribed and sealed in the book of good life, the book of the righteous and devout, and the book of sustenance and ample livelihood.

I wish to bless this esteemed congregation present here, as well as all our listeners tuning in on Radio 'Kol Barama': May we all merit to be inscribed and sealed in the book of good life, the book of the righteous and devout, with ample sustenance and livelihood. May *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* fulfill all the desires of our hearts for good and blessing, and may we merit the complete redemption very soon, Amen.