

Parshas Haazinu/Yom Kippur

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1. Why Have We Not Succeeded at Being a Role Model for the World?

The Torah states, **“Is it to Hashem that you do this, O vile and unwise people? Is He not your Father, your Master? Has He not created you and firmed you?”** The Targum Onkeles explains that the wisdom of the Jewish people is the Torah because it is G’d’s Wisdom and the only prescription for their spiritual development. Yet they are not wise because they do not appreciate nor adhere to it. The Midrash refers to the Torah itself as a *“Chemda Ganuza – a Hidden Treasure,”* that preceded existence for more than 900 generations. G’d gave it to the Klal Yisroel because they descend from the Patriarchs and have great spiritual potential. However, possessing something of such special value and not using it is the ultimate in foolishness.

On the Festivals we recite in the Amidah (Silent Prayer), **“You (G’d) have chosen us from all the peoples; You loved us and found favor in us; You exalted us above all the tongues and You sanctified us with Your Commandments...”** Directly following this we recite, **“Our G’d and G’d of our Forefathers, may they rise, come, reach, be noted, be favored, be heard, be considered, and remembered – the remembrance and consideration of ourselves...(the yaaleh v’yavo).”** Why does this verse follow the one that describes G’d’s reasons for choosing us to be His people through the giving of the Torah?

The *Yisod V’Shoresh HaAvodah* asks if because of His love and desire for us G’d chose the Jewish people to be His Nation, elevated us above all the other nations of the world and sanctified us through His Mitzvos – then how could we have failed to such a degree? After G’d put the Jews on such a lofty pedestal through the Sinai experience how could we have justified not adhering to His Torah? Since we are culpable to this degree for our lack of appreciation and insensitivity for the mitzvos, we beseech G’d to remember all the merits pertaining to Klal Yisroel as far back as the merits of the Patriarchs (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov).

Sforno explains that the Jewish people were meant to be the role model for the nations of the world through our dedication to G’d; however, we failed in that capacity by initially worshipping the Golden Calf (Agle HaZahav). We diminished our own ability to function in this way.

It is interesting to note that until the onset of Christianity the concept of moral and ethical behavior did not exist in the non-Jewish world. The non-Jew was a barbarian and predator with no understanding of chesed (kindness) or compassion. It is only after Christianity culled from the Torah the elements of humanism and disseminated it to the masses did they have a semblance of moral and ethical beings. However, the role of the Jew vis-à-vis the world at large goes beyond being the moral and ethical model.

The Jew’s ethical and moral behavior and communal responsibilities are Divinely Ordained just as all of the other precepts of the Torah. Observing Shabbos and dietary laws, as well as giving charity to the poor, are all dictates of the Torah and do not emanate from the Jew’s compassion or his own understanding of what is proper.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos tells us that if a Jew realizes that he is wearing *shatnes* (a combination of wool and linen that is forbidden by the Torah) he must immediately remove the shatnes garment, even though he will be naked in a public setting. One may ask – how could this be, what about the issue of human dignity? The only basis for human dignity comes from following the instructions of the Torah. If the Torah Commands us to remove our clothing because of the prohibition of wearing shatnes (regardless of the setting), then this becomes proper behavior. Human dignity means to live as G'd wants the human being to live.

The failing of the Jew throughout the ages has been his lack of appreciation for his heritage. If he would understand the value and the purpose of his own existence relating to G'd, he would behave differently. The ten-day period between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, known as the Ten Days of Penitence, is a time when our prayers are received immediately (as explained by Rambam in the Laws of Teshuvah). We should pray for ourselves and for all of Klal Yisroel to have clarity, appreciate and understand our value to G'd and re-dedicate ourselves to the Torah.

2. What is the Ultimate Rehabilitative Process of Teshuvah?

The Torah states in the beginning of Sefer Bereishis, ***“Bereishis bara Elokeem es ha’shamaiyim v’es ha’aretz: v’ha’aretz hoysa tohu v’vohu v’choshech al panei tahom v’ruach Elokeem merachefes al panei ha’maiyim – In the beginning of G’d’s creating the heavens and the earth – when the earth was empty, with darkness upon the surface of the deep, and the Divine Presence hovered upon the surface of the waters.”*** The Midrash explains that each of the words in this opening verse of the Torah alludes to events that will take place in the future. Meaning, when G'd created existence, He preordained that certain events will happen.

The Midrash explains that ***“v’ha’aretz hoysa tohu - earth was empty,”*** refers to the Babylonian exile. ***“Choshech - darkness,”*** refers to the Greek exile; as the Talmud tells us, ***“they blackened our eyes with their decrees.”*** ***“Al panei tahom- surface of the deep”*** alludes to the Roman exile, which is seemingly as endless as the “deep” source of water. (We are still experiencing the Roman exile after more than 2,000 years.) ***“V’ruach Elokeem merachefes al panei ha’maiyim - the Divine Presence hovered upon the surface of the waters”*** is ascribed to the spirit of Moshiach who will come only in the merit of teshuvah (repentance) which is compared to water (*maiyim*). As it is stated in Eicha, ***“Your heart should gush forth water when you stand before Hashem.”*** Rambam states in *Hilchos Teshuvah (The Laws of Teshuvah)* that the confession that one makes during teshuvah must be in the presence of Hashem. What relevance does teshuvah have to water? Why is the statement ***“hovered upon the surface of the waters”*** an allusion to teshuvah?

Rambam states that if one attempts to do teshuvah but does not totally sever himself from his sinful past, then his teshuvah process is equivalent to immersing in a mikvah (ritual pool) for the sake of purification, while still holding on to a rodent, which is the source of his spiritual contamination. Rambam is comparing the teshuvah process to the mikvah itself. However, the verse from Eicha, which is cited by the Midrash, is indicating that the water itself is not the teshuvah but rather a consequence of the teshuvah. As it says, ***“your heart will gush forth water.”***

If one is spiritually contaminated, he must immerse himself completely in a mikvah in order to achieve spiritual purity. The Halacha (law) dictates that if there is as much as one hair of his body that is not under water, he is not purified. The desired result

is only achieved when one totally dunks himself. How do we understand the purification process of the mikvah? The Maharal of Prague (in his work on Chanukah) explains that humanity exists on dry land and not under water; therefore, the latter represents non-existence. When a person immerses himself in a body of water, in essence, he enters into a state of non-being. When he emerges, he enters a state of existence and is considered a “*bria chadasha* – a new being.” As such, whatever contamination he had prior to the immersion, no longer applies to him.

Dovid HaMelech says in Tehillim (Psalms), “A broken and shattered heart Elokeem (G’d) will not disgrace.” Rabbeinu Yona explains in his work *Shaarei Teshuvah* – *The Gates of Repentance* that the teshuvah process only has meaning because of the Attribute of Mercy (Midas HaRachamim). However, within the context of Midas HaDin (The attribute of Justice) there is no place for teshuvah. Dovid revealed to us that if the person is truly broken and shattered, as a result of the teshuvah process, even Elokeem (the Attribute of Justice) will not disgrace (reject) this person’s teshuvah.

The Torah tells us that an earthenware vessel (after becoming contaminated) cannot be purified in a mikvah. In order for it to become uncontaminated, it must be broken or shattered so it loses its function as a vessel. If it is reassembled, it is considered a new creation that does not have relevance to the original vessel – and therefore it is pure. The same holds true for a person. If he is broken and remorseful because of his sins and does teshuvah, he is forgiven because when he is broken he is the equivalent of the non-existent person. Therefore, after the process of teshuvah, the individual is a new person. Thus, because the sinner no longer exists, even the Attribute of Justice cannot prosecute the penitent.

We say in the tefillah of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that we are likened to a broken shard - “earthenware vessel.” We identify with the purification process of the earthenware vessel because - “A broken heart Elokeem (G’d) will not disgrace.”

We can now understand why the Midrash compares the process of teshuvah with water. Just as when one immerses into the water, entering into a non-existent state and he emerges pure, so too does one need to be broken and remorseful to the point that one’s heart gushes forth water (tears) to indicate that he is totally broken. Thus, the “water” referred to in the Torah “**hovered upon the surface of the waters**” is synonymous with the broken state of man when he is in a process of teshuvah.

3. What is the Significance of the Seventy Root Nations of the World?

The Torah states, “**When the Supreme One gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of man, He set the borders of the peoples according to the number of the Children of Yisroel. For Hashem’s portion is His people; Yaakov is the measure of His inheritance.**” Meaning, when G’d established the nations of the world, He did so in accordance with the number of members of Yaakov’s family who came to Egypt. The Torah tells us that the reason there are seventy nations of the world is that there were seventy individuals of Yaakov’s family who descended to Egypt. How do we understand this?

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that when G’d created Adam (the first Man), he was created as a spiritually pure being. Because of his purity, all of his descendents would be spiritually pure. However, there existed a representation of evil in

the world – the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. When Adam ate of the Tree of Knowledge, he lost his pure state because it became intermingled with Evil. Thus, all of his decedents were born with an intermingling of Good and Evil. It was not until Yaakov Avinu (our Patriarch) that spiritual purity was reestablished because he was able to purge himself completely of the impurity, which was inherited from Adam. Consequently, Yaakov produced seventy offspring who were endowed with pure souls. With this explanation, we can understand the Gemara in Tractate Bava Metzia that tells us that the radiance of Yaakov had a semblance to the radiance of Adam. Meaning, that Yaakov possessed a purity that was similar to Adam's original state. On the contrary, the seventy nations of the world remained spirituality impaired because of the intermingling of Good and Evil. Because of their make-up, the nations of the world are diametrically opposed to the existence of Yaakov and his family – who were seventy in number.

We see that by G'd's design, the Jewish people are meant to be the counterbalance to the nations of the world. The role of the Jew is to have a positive influence on the spirituality of the nations of the world and not to be influenced by them. This is why G'd created seventy nations to correspond to the seventy descendents of Yaakov.

Sforno tells us at the beginning of Sefer Shemos (Book of Exodus) that when the Torah refers to the seventy descendents of Yaakov, it only identifies Yaakov's children by name and not his other descendents. Sforno explains that by identifying them by name, the Torah is indicating that each son had his own unique dimension of spirituality. Although all seventy members of Yaakov's family were special, they were not on the same level as his twelve sons.

The Maharal in his work *Gevuras Hashem* explains that the slavery and bondage in Egypt did not commence to any degree until the passing of Yaakov Avinu. Because of Yaakov Avinu's great dimension, the Evil influences in Egypt could not erode the spiritual standing of Yaakov and his family. However, the moment Yaakov passed away, the bondage in Egypt began to evolve and was finally implemented when his entire generation passed away. It was at that time that the impurity of Egypt was able to spiritually entomb the Jewish people and cause them to lose contact with their holiness. If G'd had not taken the Jewish people out of Egypt when He did, they would have been lost forever.

It is interesting to note that world events seem to revolve around the Jewish people, despite the fact that we are so few in number. How is it possible that billions of people take notice of an innocuous number of Jews (7 billion humans vs. 13 million Jews)? Evidently, the world at large is pitted against the essence of the Jew. There is a spiritual tug-of-war between the Jewish people and the nations of the world. This is the battle between Esav and Yaakov.

On September 11 2003, the nation and the world commemorated and memorialized the tragedy that took place two years ago. How have we, as Jews, changed as a result of that tragic event? We need to recognize that G'd is reminding us that the Jews, who are the spiritual counterbalance of the world, must fulfill their role in existence. If the Jew is spiritually strong and steeped in Torah study and mitzvos, then the world is strengthened. If on the other hand the Jew is not attached to G'd and has no interest in his spiritual development, then the world is unprotected and subject to insecurity through many tragic events. As the Torah states, G'd created the nations of the world based on the number of people in the family of Yaakov, indicating that the Jew is

spiritually the equivalent of all existence.

G'd sent us a message two years ago that although we live under the protection of the most powerful nation of the world we are not safe and secure unless we are close to Him. We could have all the security measures in the world and we will still not be safe because the only way to gain security is by adhering to the Will of G'd. As Dovid HaMelech (King David) states in Tehillim (Psalms), "If Hashem is your security, then you have security." Unfortunately, the fact is the world has not significantly changed since the tragedy of September 11. We find that most people (even most synagogue goers) believe that the most significant change in the world since September 11 is that people are a bit more courteous to one another. Is that the reason that more than 3,000 people died tragically – so that people should be able to say "good morning" with a broader smile to one another? It is absurd to diminish the significance of this tragedy in this manner. We as Jews must understand the message that our only safe-haven in this existence is to become closer to G'd.

4. G'd Throughout the Ages Has Demonstrated His Love for Us

It says in Selichos, **"Do with us as You promised us: "And despite all that (all of our failings), when they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have despised them nor abhorred them to destroy them, to annul My covenant with them, for I am Hashem their G'd."** Despite all of the shortcomings of the Jewish people and the many exiles and tragedies they have experienced, how did G'd demonstrate to them that He did not "despise them nor abhor them"?

The Gemara in Tractate Megillah explains that the meaning of the verse "he did not despise them" is referring to the Babylonian exile. During this trying time He sent them Daniel, Chananya, Meshael, and Azarya. Chananya, Meshael, and Azarya were thrown into the fiery kiln because they would not bow to the image of Nebuchadnezer (the Babylonian Emperor who destroyed the First Bais HaMikdash (The Temple)). In addition, G'd sent them Daniel who was thrown into the lion's den. Meaning, that G'd demonstrated that He did not "despise" the Jewish people because of their sins and he sent them the gift of special Torah leaders such as Daniel, Chananiya, Meshael, and Azarya.

It continues that He did not "abhor" the Jewish people because He also sent the Hashmanaim and Mattisyahu, (who were responsible for the miracle of Chanukah), during the Greek exile. He sent Mordechai and Esther who saved them from Haman the Wicked who had decreed that every Jewish man, woman and child should be annihilated (the miracle of Purim). Had it not been for these special individuals, the Jews would have become completely assimilated or destroyed.

The Gemara concludes that the meaning of "not to annul His Covenant" is referring to the Persian exile when G'd presented the Jewish people with Reb Yehudah HaNasi (Judah the Prince) who was the redactor of the Oral Law. The Oral interpretation of the Torah would have been forgotten had it not been for Judah the Prince compiling it into the Mishnah. We refer to Judah as, Rabbeinu Ha'Kadosh (Our Holy Rabbi). He is the only person, other than Moshe, who we call our Rabbi- "Rabbeinu" to indicate his greatness.

Although the Jewish people had many spiritual shortcomings and experienced many exiles and tragedies, G'd nevertheless demonstrated His love for us by providing us with special Torah leadership who gave their respective generations the necessary understanding of their heritage. If it were not for these leaders, we would have been

assimilated – G'd Forbid. Thus demonstrating - “...I will not have despised them nor abhorred them to destroy them...”

The Gemara states a principle that if one prays for a fellow Jew to have his need fulfilled, which is identical to his own, G'd will give priority to the need of the one who is praying on behalf of his fellow. Unfortunately, there are more Jews unaffiliated with Judaism than those who are; and those who are connected can always use an upgrade in their level of commitment. What do we do for our unaffiliated brethren and what do we do for ourselves to be able to advance our own Judaism? If a Jew truly understood who he is and what his heritage is, he would definitely become involved in Torah study and mitzvah observance. It is only because of a lack of Jewish education and understanding that Jews drift away. We must pray that our fellow Jew be given the understanding and appreciation for our heritage.

The Mishnah in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us that whoever saves the life of a single Jew it is as if he had saved the entire world. Therefore, if one saves a Jew spiritually, the value is the equivalent to saving the entire world and it will impact upon his progeny until the end of time.

5. G'd's Love for the Jewish People

The Torah states that at the end of time the Jewish people will eventually do teshuvah and return to G'd. As a result of this, G'd will bring forth great blessing to the Jews and He will, “...return to rejoice (*l'sus*) over you (the Klal Yisroel) for good, as He rejoiced (*sos*) over your forefathers, when you listen to the voice of Hashem, your G'd...” The Torah uses the term “*sos*” to refer to the joy that G'd will feel at this time. Why does the Torah use the term “*sos*” rather than “*simcha*” or many other expressions of rejoicing?

Dovid HaMelech (King David) states in Tehillim (Psalms), “I rejoice (*sos*) over your words (the Torah) as if I found a large amount of spoils.” Dovid HaMelech could have expressed his joy over the Torah and mitzvos with other terms, however, he specifically chose this term. The Vilna Gaon z'tl explains that the word “*simcha*” indicates joy that is complete, while the term “*sos*” denotes a happiness that is incomplete. He explains this through the following parable:.

In order for the king to reward his loyal subject for his service, he allows him to enter into his royal treasury and take whatever his heart desires but only for a period of five minutes. The subject is joyful and thankful that he will be allowed to take whatever he wants from the royal treasury. However, he is also anguished by the time constraint he is given because he understands the opportunity at hand. Similarly, Dovid HaMelech rejoiced over the Torah that he was given because he understood its infinite value. However, at the same time he was distressed by the fact that he was restricted to seventy years and would not be able to partake of this treasure beyond that point.

With this explanation we can understand why the Torah uses the term “*sos*” to express G'd's joy and not the term “*simcha*.” G'd loves the Jewish people to such a degree that even though so much blessing is bestowed upon us, He is pained that He could not give us more. Since G'd is infinite with no restrictions, He wants to provide us with boundless blessing as well but because of our own limitations, He is unable to do so.

If G'd loves the Jews to such a degree that it gives him pain not to be able to do more for us, then we should understand that when He denies us His Goodness, it is clearly

in our best interest. Now we can somewhat appreciate the idea that because of G'd's unending love for us that even when we experience a set back in life we can understand that it emanates from His Goodness and not from vindictiveness. If He could give us more, He would. Therefore, the Mishnah states, "Just as one blesses G'd for good fortune, he must bless Him for misfortune." Because of his unlimited love for the Jewish people, He does only what is good and necessary for us.

Reb Chaim of Volozhin z'tl asks, if punishment and suffering are necessary as part of the rehabilitative spiritual process (which is only in our best interest), then why should one pray to G'd to heal him when he becomes ill? Does one ask the doctor to withhold a life-saving procedure when the only road to recovery is through that procedure? If so, then how do we understand the blessing of the Amidah – "Heal us Hashem and allow us to recover"?

Reb Chaim answers that although G'd brings illness upon a person as part of the rehabilitation of his spirituality (which is a positive thing), G'd is nevertheless affected by the fact that the Jew is in a state of suffering. It is similar to a parent who needs to assist the doctor when he performs a painful procedure to his child. The parent is joyful that the child will recover through this procedure; however, the parent feels the hurt of his child. Therefore, Reb Chaim explains that if one prays for healing because he feels G'd's pain (as a father to a child – and even to a greater degree) then that feeling itself becomes the rehabilitative process that causes the person to be deserving of recovery. One can only relate to G'd's pain (when a Jew is in a state of suffering) if one understands to what degree G'd loves the Jewish people.

6. The Capability of Man

The Torah states, "**I call heaven and earth today to bear witness against you: I have placed life and death before you...**" The Midrash explains that Moshe is saying to the Klal Yisroel "*Heaven and earth were created to accommodate mankind and that they have never deviated from their function. Did one ever plant a wheat kernel and have it grow barley? Heaven and earth are not subject to reward and punishment and yet they do not deviate from the purpose for which they were created. Therefore Klal Yisroel who is rewarded for doing good and punished for doing evil, definitely should not deviate (from the purpose for which they were created).*"

Chazal explain that the laws of nature operate in a specific manner because G'd chose their functions to help mankind to maximize its purpose, which is to choose between good and evil. Just as G'd created heaven and earth with all the ingredients necessary to help mankind fulfill its purpose, so too did He create the human being with all the capability to fulfill his purpose. What is the purpose of man? – To serve G'd - to sublimate and subordinate the physical to the spiritual, despite one's inclination for the material. Therefore, man was given the capability to bring about that result.

The Torah tells us that G'd provides man with all that is necessary to fulfill his purpose; and the mechanism that is needed to succeed and advance spiritually is the Torah itself. Just as the heavy rains pierce the ground to sustain the tree (though its roots) and just as the dew continuously covers the vegetation of the earth to bring about blessing and sustain existence, so too did G'd give us the Torah which is the equivalent of both rain and dew to sustain our spirituality.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the Written Law (*Torah Sh'Bichsav*) is equivalent to rain because it is tangible as the rain is visible. However, the Oral Law

(*Torah Sh'Bal Peh*), which is communicated verbally, is as unnoticed as the dew when it is falling. Just as G'd gave rain and the dew to sustain existence so too did He give us the Written and Oral Law to sustain our spiritual existence. Therefore a person cannot say that it is too difficult to do the Will of G'd, because He provided us with whatever is necessary to bring that about.

Pirkei Avos (Ethics of Our Fathers) states, "*Im ein Kemach, ein Torah* (If there is no flour, there is no Torah)." Meaning that one cannot study Torah if he does not have material sustenance; Therefore, G'd provides it. Otherwise, one can say that he cannot study Torah because of his personal circumstance. However the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains this statement in Pirkei Avos differently – "If there is no flour, it is an **indication** that there is no Torah." If one toils and does not succeed then it is an indication that he is not pursuing Torah - because if he were, then G'd would provide for him adequately.

We must be cognizant of events that we experience in our lives. These are indications which give us direction and understanding on whether we are on the proper path or have gone astray. We need to understand why there are difficulties and tragedies on a personal and communal level. If Klal Yisroel is not succeeding spiritually then there is no material success. However if Klal Yisroel, as a whole, is functioning as a spiritual entity, then G'd will provide whatever material success is needed to accommodate our purpose in existence.

7. Does the Jew Have the Ability to Empower G'd?

The Torah states, "**You have weakened the Rock (referring to G'd) which gave birth to you, and forgot G'd who brought you forth.**" There are a number of commentators who explain this verse in many ways. The Sforno explains that the Torah is saying that if the Jew's focus in life is materialism, then his understanding of G'd, (The Rock), will become weakened because he is distracted from his spirituality.

The Zohar tells us that when G'd informed the angels that He was going to create man, their response was that man is deficient and not even worth mentioning – because he is prone to fail. G'd nevertheless created man and punished the angels who opposed this. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains that the verse "**You have weakened the Rock...**" is referring to G'd's position that man's existence is worthwhile. However, if man fails, then he weakens G'd's position in his defense.

Rashi on the other hand explains this verse differently. It is referring to the fact that G'd bestows existence with His blessing; however, if man should fail in the spiritual realm, then G'd will withhold His blessing because the Jewish people are not deserving. Therefore, the Torah is saying, "**You have weakened the Rock...**"

When the *meraglim* (*the spies*) returned from scouting out the Land of Canaan, they reported that they had seen the decedents of the giants and other untenable situations. They had said that the nations of Canaan "are stronger than Him." Rashi cites Chazal, who explain that the spies were actually saying that the tribes of Canaan were even stronger than G'd. They believed that G'd was able to defeat and destroy the Egyptians, but the Canaanites had thirty-one kingdoms and G'd did not have the power to destroy them. How do we understand this? The spies themselves participated in the Sinai event and prophesized while in an awake state. After understanding the awesomeness and capability of G'd, how is it possible for them to say that He is not able to defeat thirty-one kingdoms?

Based on Rashi's interpretation of the verse **"You have weakened the Rock..."** we are able to understand what the spies were saying. G'd's level of interaction with this existence is based on the Jew's merit. If the Jew adheres to the Torah and does the Will of G'd then he is deserving of His blessing; however, if the Jew fails and is undeserving, then G'd withholds His blessing and does not allow the Jew to succeed. Meaning, that G'd binds Himself to the principle of "reward and punishment." The spies believed that the Jews had sufficient merit to be redeemed from the enslavement of Egypt; however, they believed that they did not have sufficient merit to allow G'd to bring about the conquest of thirty-one kingdoms of Canaan.

Their understanding was that the infrastructure of "reward and punishment" – the principle of being deserving - was put in place by G'd to govern existence and was established in a way that even G'd Himself was not able to override the system. However, this was/is not the case. Despite one's unworthiness, if G'd should choose to interact with existence in a positive manner, then He overrides the system.

The Menorah in the Bais HaMikdash was placed outside of the Holy of Holies, on the other side of the *paroches* (*curtains*) which was the separation between the Covered Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. The Torah states, "the Menorah must be placed outside of the *paroches*." The Midrash explains that G'd is actually saying, "You must put the Menorah outside the Holy of Holies (which is the location of the Divine Presence) so that you should not mistakenly think that I need your light." The Midrash continues and says that Moshe asked G'd, "Why do you want us to kindle the lights of the Menorah since You are the light of the world?" G'd responded by saying, "The reason I want you to kindle the light is to elevate you in the eyes of the nations of the world - that they should see that I do need your light." It seems that the two statements of G'd are contradictory. On one hand G'd says the Menorah must be placed outside of "My location" (the Holy of Holies) to indicate that He does not need our light. On the other hand, His response to Moshe is that in fact He does need our light.

Under normal circumstances the world functions within the context of reward and punishment. If we succeed spiritually then G'd bestows blessing on the world. In other words, our "light" is needed because it determines the level on which the world functions. However, if we should fail spiritually, then G'd's blessing is withdrawn and the world is diminished. Seemingly, from this one could believe that the Klal Yisroel empowers G'd. However, this is not the case because if G'd chooses to override the system, He is not limited or bound by any criteria. This is indicated by the location of where the Menorah is placed: "it must be outside of the *paroches* to indicate that I do not need your light. - I am able to bestow blessing, regardless of your unworthiness."

The Torah tells us that there will be peace in the Land when the Klal Yisroel will follow the Statutes of Hashem. Is there no peace today because of the reality of anti-Semitism "Esav sonei l'Yaakov – Esav despises the existence of Yaakov" or is it because the Jewish people are not adhering to the Dictates of the Torah? If the Jewish people were to follow the ways of the Torah, then they would strengthen "the Rock"; however, if we as Jews falter, then He becomes "the Rock that we have weakened".

8. Why is the Jew Held to Such a High Standard - Especially on Rosh Hashanah?

The Mishna in Tractate Rosh Hashanah tells us that a Shofar cannot be made from the horn of a cow. The Gemara explains this by giving two reasons. The first reason is that the horn of a cow is referred to as "keren" and not "Shofar." Secondly, there is a

principle “*Ein kateigor naaseh sanheigor* - that a prosecutor cannot be an advocate.” The horn of the cow represents the Golden Calf (Chet Ha’Agle) with which the Jews sinned at Sinai. Anything, which has relevance to the Golden Calf must be avoided at a time when we are in need of an advocate. The cow or gold arouses the most serious level of prosecution against the Klal Yisroel.

On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol (the High Priest) officiated with two sets of vestments. He would wear the golden ones when he performed the service that was not specific to Yom Kippur. When he performed the service that was particular to Yom Kippur, he wore white vestments. He was not permitted to wear the golden vestments for the Yom Kippur service because he had to enter the Holy of Holies (the location of the Shechina – the Divine Presence) to atone for the Klal Yisroel, and if he wore gold, then he could not function in the capacity of an advocate.

The Gemara asks, since the principle of “a prosecutor cannot be an advocate” has no relevance outside of the location of the Shechina, then why can't we utilize the horn of a cow to fulfill our obligation of Shofar since this mitzvah is also performed outside of the Holy of Holies?

The Gemara answers that when one blows the Shofar it is considered as if he is standing inside the Holy of Holies. How do we understand this? Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Judgment (Yom HaDin). The Midas HaDin (the Attribute of Justice) of G’d is so exacting on this Day that even the angels in heaven tremble from its awesomeness. Midas HaDin subjects all of existence to an exact level of scrutiny.

The Second Bais HaMikdash (the Second Temple), which stood for 420 years, had more than 300 Kohanim Gadolim (High Priests) officiating over this period. However, the First Bais HaMikdash, which stood for a period of 410 years, had only eleven. The Gemara tells us that if the Kohen Gadol was not fully spiritually qualified, he would expire immediately when he entered into the Holy of Holies. This occurred because being so close to the Shechina (the Divine Presence), if he was not in a perfect state, he would be subject to Midas HaDin. It is evident from this that when Midas HaDin is functioning in its most potent form it is an indication of our close proximity to the Shechina. Therefore, Rosh Hashanah, which is the Yom HaDin (Day of Judgment), is an indication of how close we are to G’d.

On one hand, the Judgment of G’d is awesome and fearful, causing the angels in heaven to tremble. However, on the other hand, His closeness to us reveals the degree to which we are valued. Being in such proximity to the Divine Presence on Rosh Hashanah is the equivalent to standing in the Holy of Holies. Therefore, we do not fulfill the mitzvah of Shofar with a cow’s horn because the principle of “a prosecutor cannot be an advocate” is in force, just as it was for the Kohen Gadol; This is unlike Yom Kippur, when he was the only one permitted to enter into the Holy of Holies.

It is stated that the Shofar should be taken from a ram because it symbolizes the ultimate submission and sacrifice for G’d. When Avraham Avinu (Avraham our Patriarch) was told by G’d to bring his only son (Yitzchak) - who he loved - as a sacrifice, he did not hesitate and immediately embarked on that mission. However, after the binding of Yitzchak, an angel called from heaven and told him not to slaughter his son. At that moment Avraham noticed a ram caught in the thicket and prepared it to be brought as a sacrifice in the place of his son Yitzchak. As a result, G’d valued the sacrifice of the ram as if Avraham had sacrificed his own son. Therefore, the ram’s horn symbolizes the most advanced level of dedication and sacrifice to G’d.

When Satan, the prosecutor of the Jewish people, begins his prosecution, he is silenced by the sound of the ram's horn because it is the ultimate advocate of the Klal Yisroel.

Understanding the gravity of the Day of Judgment, we must also recognize G'd's exceptional love for us, which is the basis for the Attribute of Justice. Despite the awesomeness of the day, the Jew must feel fortunate that we are in this situation because of His closeness to us.