



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



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WHAT ROLE WILL I PLAY?

Rosh Hashanah is known as the יום הדין - the Day of Judgment. The משנה teaches that on Rosh Hashanah, כל באי עולם עוברין לפניו, כבני מרון — every person passes individually before Hashem, kivnei maron, like sheep being counted one by one (משנה ראש השנה א:ב).

But if Rosh Hashanah is our day of judgment, something seems strange: Why don't we spend the day listing everything we did wrong? Because Rosh Hashanah begins with something bigger. The Gemara teaches that on Rosh Hashanah we recite מלכיות — verses of Hashem's Kingship — כדי שתמליכוני עליכם, so that we crown Hashem as King over us (ראש השנה טז ע"א). Imagine standing at the coronation of a king among thousands of people, proudly declaring, "Long live the King!" Then the King turns toward you and asks: "You are part of my kingdom. What are you contributing to it?" That may be one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves this Rosh Hashanah. Sometimes, as teenagers, it is easy to think that our real opportunity to make a difference begins later,

When I am older. **Someday**, I'll change."

But the shofar calls us to wake up now. The Rambam famously explains its message: עורו משנתכם — wake up from your sleep, examine your actions, and remember your Creator (רמב"ם, הלכות תשובה ג:ד). Hashem needs something from each of us right now. Our Torah, kindness, leadership, friendships, and everyday choices can make our nation stronger and Hashem's world better. So perhaps the question of Rosh Hashanah isn't only, "How did I do last year?" It is also: **"Who can I become this year — and what role will I play in Hashem's kingdom?"** This Rosh Hashanah, let's not wait for "someday." Our opportunity begins **now**.



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DIPPING INTO A NEW YEAR

Why do we eat the סימנים if we know they don't actually change the outcome of the year?

On Rosh Hashanah, we eat special foods, and we say יהי רצון asking Hashem for a good year. But why do we need the food? Hashem doesn't need a piece of apple to know what we want!

One answer can be that the סימנים are a way of turning our hopes into actions. Instead of just saying, "I want to have a good year," we stop and think about what kind of year we actually want.

For example, when we eat an apple with honey and ask for a שנה טובה ומתוקה, we aren't

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just asking Hashem for nice things. We're reminding ourselves to look for the sweetness that already exists in our lives and to create more sweetness for other people.

The pomegranate is another example. We ask that our כויות should be as numerous as its seeds. A pomegranate has so many seeds that when you look at it from the outside, you can't even see what's inside. Sometimes people are like that, too. Someone might look like they have everything together, but inside, they're struggling. Rosh Hashanah reminds us to judge people favorably and remember that there's always more going on inside than we can see.

And maybe that's the biggest message of the ס'ימים. Rosh Hashanah isn't only about asking Hashem to change our year; it's about asking ourselves what we can change. We can't control everything that happens this year, but we can control some things: how we speak to people, whether we make someone feel included, whether we notice someone who's having a hard day, and how we make an effort to become better.

So when we sit around the table on Rosh Hashanah and say all the הי רצון, we shouldn't just think, "I hope Hashem gives me a good year." We can also think, "What can I do to help make this a good year?" Because the ס'ימים aren't magic; they're reminders. They remind us what we're asking for, what kind of person we want to be, and what kind of year we want to create with Hashem's help.

■ שנה טובה ומתוקה!



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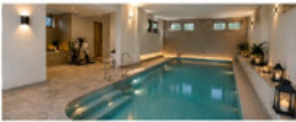
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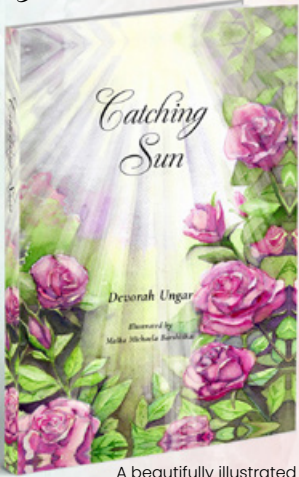
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