



GEULAS YISRAEL

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RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION
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Rosh Hashanah: Hidden... But Not For Long

The resonance and gravitas of Rosh Hashanah are enormous. It is the day of judgment, when individuals and nations pass before Hashem, awaiting His judgment over the year ahead. Our world needs so much divine intervention, and on Rosh Hashanah we pray not only for ourselves and our families, but for our people and for the world we all inhabit.

Rosh Hashanah is described in Tehillim (81) in an enigmatic fashion: *Bakeseh l'yom chageinu* — “at the concealed time of our festival.” Phonetically, *keseh* echoes *kisei*, a throne, hinting at Hashem’s sovereignty and heavenly throne. Etymologically, however, *keseh* is closer to *kisui*, something covered or concealed. It is striking that a day of such enormous resonance should be described as a day of concealment.

THE HIDDEN DAY

The concealment of Rosh Hashanah runs much deeper than the term *keseh*. The Torah itself offers almost no indication of Rosh Hashanah’s magnitude. It appears simply as one festival among others, without any mention of judgment, malchut, or the fate of the world. The Torah itself leaves the day’s deeper meaning largely unspoken.



Rav Yehuda
Amital ztvl”l

Not only are the judgment and majesty of the day concealed, but even its central mitzvah is hidden. The Torah describes Rosh Hashanah as יום תרועה and, alternatively, as

זכרון תרועה, without explicitly mentioning the blowing of a shofar. The Torah explicitly commands the sounding of a shofar on Yom Kippur of the Yovel. By comparing that passage with Rosh Hashanah, Chazal derive that the *teruah* of Rosh Hashanah is also produced by a shofar.

Even the mitzvah that gives Rosh Hashanah its most recognizable sound is only indirectly revealed.

Rosh Hashanah seems determined to hide its own significance. The heavenly drama that will shape our future is never explicitly described, and even the central mitzvah of the day is only alluded to, its meaning uncovered through a *derashah*. The Torah withholds not only the magnitude of the day, but even the identity of its central mitzvah.

Why is Rosh Hashanah such a concealed day?

WE KNOW

Rosh Hashanah is concealed because it celebrates Hashem’s *malchut*. His sovereignty preceded creation and will outlast history. It

permeates the entire cosmos. Yet in our world it remains hidden. Until the day when His presence is openly recognized, His sovereignty remains largely concealed.

Most of humanity is entirely unaware of the magnitude of the day and of the sovereignty of the One before Whom they stand in judgment.

Except for one people.

אֲשֶׁרִי הָעָם יְדִיעִי תְרוּעָה ה' בְּאוֹר פְּנִיךָ יִהְיֶה לָנוּ.

We do know the majesty of this day. We know that it is *Yom HaDin*, and we understand the larger story of *malchut* that Rosh Hashanah represents. The day looks back to a world in which Hashem's authority was uncontested and forward to a future when His sovereignty will once again be acknowledged by all humanity.

תִּקְעוּ בַחֲדָשׁ שׁוֹפָר בְּכֶסֶה לְיוֹם חֲגֻנוּ.

For the rest of the world, it remains a day of *keseh*, hidden and concealed. For us, it is *chageinu* — the day on which we recognize and celebrate the *malchut* they cannot yet see.

That awareness allows us, for one day each year, to see beyond the world as it currently appears. We remember a world in which Hashem's sovereignty was clear, and we look ahead to a future when humanity will once again recognize His presence.

REFLECTING HIS PRESENCE

We do not merely recognize His *malchut*; we reflect it. We represent Hashem in this world, and the way we are perceived shapes, in some measure, the way His presence is perceived. When the Jewish people are elevated, His presence becomes more visible. When we are degraded or despised, that presence becomes more obscured. Humanity encounters Hashem through His chosen people, and when that people is diminished, His presence in the world is diminished as well.

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On the eve of Rosh Hashanah 5787, we live in a fallen world in which Hashem's presence, as reflected through His people, has been badly obscured. The world struggles to accept one of the central truths of our history: Hashem gave this land to His people and brought us back to live under His eye. After centuries of exile, we have finally returned. Yet much of the world still cannot accept our presence here.

That rejection has hardened into anger and, increasingly, hatred. False accusations are hurled at us, and Israel is caricatured through the darkest categories of the modern era: apartheid, genocide, and colonialism. Our return to the land Hashem gave us should make His presence more visible in history. Instead, the hostility it has provoked has, for now, driven that presence even deeper into concealment.

DIMINISHED KAVOD

My Rebbe, Rav Amital, once described a Rosh Hashanah davening during the Holocaust. They gathered in a darkened room, and when they reached the words *ובכן תן כבוד* and when they reached the words *ה' לעמך*, they began to laugh bitterly and pity themselves. What honor could the Jewish people possibly receive while they were being annihilated across Europe?

In the decades that followed, a measure of that honor was restored. We returned to Eretz Yisrael, rebuilt Jewish sovereignty, and

witnessed a renaissance of Jewish life that would have been unimaginable without the State of Israel. Our *kavod* rose with it.

And now our *kavod* is once again under assault. In many ways, this is an old story, one that has followed us throughout the two thousand years since we left Yerushalayim. We were repeatedly mocked, maligned, and portrayed as the source of society's deepest ills. The *kavod* of Hashem's people was diminished, and with it His presence became even more concealed. Today, as in the past, we are once again being assailed, caricatured, and verbally attacked across the world.

Yet there is something paradoxical about the assault on our *kavod* at this stage of history. Much of the hostility directed at Jews today is bound up with our return to Eretz Yisrael and our effort to rebuild Jewish life in the land Hashem gave us. That return should make His presence more visible in history. Yet precisely because of it, our people are vilified and our *kavod* is diminished. The process through which Hashem is becoming more visible has, for now, provoked hostility that obscures Him even further.

Zionism and Judaism have therefore become increasingly intertwined in the eyes of the world. Hatred of Israel spills into hatred of Jews, while hostility toward Jews often expresses itself through hostility toward Israel. The attempt to deny our return to Eretz Yisrael becomes part of the older attempt to diminish the Jewish people themselves. We live inside that painful paradox of *keseh*: our return begins to uncover Hashem's presence, while the reaction to that return diminishes our *kavod* and pushes Him further into concealment.

On Rosh Hashanah, for one day, we try to break through it: to recognize the King who remains hidden and to pray for the day when

His presence will finally be visible to all.

FROM KESEH TO GILUI

It will not always be this way. Before blowing the shofar, we recite seven times the perek of Tehillim (47) that imagines the end of history, when *keseh* finally gives way to *gilui Shechinah*. The nations themselves gather to celebrate Hashem's sovereignty:

כָּל הָעַמִּים תִּקְעוּ כִּי הִרְעוּ לְאֱלֹקִים בְּקוֹל הָנָה.

Hashem's revelation is heralded by the sound of the shofar:

עֲלֵה אֱלֹקִים בְּתִרְעָה ה' בְּקוֹל שׁוֹפָר.

And our return to Eretz Yisrael is part of that revelation:

יִבְחַר לָנוּ אֶת נַחֲלָתָנוּ אֶת גְּאוֹן יַעֲקֹב אֲשֶׁר אָהֵב סֵלָה.

The world that once resisted our return will eventually recognize what that return represents. The restoration of the Jewish people to Eretz Yisrael and the revelation of Hashem's presence will finally be understood as parts of the same story.

That is the world we pray for on Rosh Hashanah:

הוֹפֵעַ בְּהִדָּר גְּאוֹן אֶזְרָךְ עַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל אֲרָצֶךָ.

A world in which concealment finally ends:
וַיֵּדַע כָּל פְּעוּל כִּי אַתָּה פְּעַלְתָּ, וַיִּבֶן כָּל יָצוֹר כִּי אַתָּה יִצְרְתָּ, וַיֹּאמֶר כָּל אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁמָה בָּאָפוֹ: ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֶלֶךְ וּמַלְכוּתוֹ בְּכָל מִשְׁלָה.

For now, Rosh Hashanah remains *bakeseh*. We await the day when the King we already know will be known by all. ■



Rabbi Moshe Taragin's latest sefer entitled: **Echos of Rashi** is available at: mtaraginbooks.com.

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