

# L'Chaim



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, *Nitzavim*, is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana. There are so many things about this portion that connect to Rosh Hashana. Nitzavim speaks of our commitment to G-d, His Torah and *mitzvot* (commandments). It teaches about "teshuvah" and tells of how G-d will gather us from the farthest places. It is clearly talking about us and our time, as we sit on the threshold of Moshiach's coming.

Teshuva means "return [to G-d]." On a basic level this means, to regret your past lapses, ask for forgiveness and get back on G-d's path.

For a person who has broken trust and wants to once again be trusted, being remorseful and saying "I'm sorry" is not enough. He needs to reach higher, find a greater level of character and prove himself worthy.

However teshuva can be so much more. Even the holiest of people can tap into the power of teshuva.

The verse in our Torah portion states, "And you will return until the L-rd your G-d." What does "until" mean? "Return" implies going back to a place or situation you were in before. We are returning to a place where we are in perfect harmony with G-d, the place before our lapse or indiscretion.

Each of us have a soul, described in Chabad Chasidic teachings as an actual "part" of G-d. It is our essence. Over time we could become so involved in the world around us that our soul gets forgotten.

Teshuva is connecting to our G-dly essence, the soul. It is a journey to your core, every step you take inward, brings clarity. You see how you are one with G-d, and that He loves you because you are part of Him. When you connect at this level, the lower levels of teshuva are automatic. How could you remain the same after connecting so deeply? Regret, remorse and contrition over your previous state will overtake you, and you become closer to G-d.

Being that our soul is infinite – part of Infinite G-d – there are always deeper levels to connect to. Through teshuva even a totally righteous person will access new levels of bonding with G-d.

Your core essence is already there; your soul has always been at the highest level. You now have to "return until G-d," return to where your soul is one with G-d.

Suffering also brings one closer to G-d. We have suffered enough. Perhaps G-d wants our closeness to come from our own initiative.

In preparation for Rosh Hashana, let us take the initiative to get closer to G-d. May He, with His Parental love, send Moshiach and gather the exiles and bring us home.

*Adapted by Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz from the teachings of the Rebbe, yitzihurwitz.blogspot.com. Rabbi Hurwitz, who is battling ALS, and his wife Dina, are emissaries of the Rebbe in Temecula, Ca.*

## Simple Sounds

by Rabbi Michoel Gourarie

On Rosh Hashana, we will hear the sounds of the Shofar once again. Our Sages teach us that Shofar blowing is what Rosh Hashana is all about. What is so special about these seemingly simple sounds?

The Shofar is blown throughout the service in various different ways. But it always follows the same pattern: We always begin by blowing a "Tekia" – a long straight sound. This is followed by a "Terua" (or *Shevarim*) – short, broken up, crying like sounds. These sounds are followed by yet another long "Tekia."

This is the formula: Tekia – Terua – Tekia.

A great Chassidic Rabbi explained that this pattern tells the story of our life journey and expresses the power of Rosh Hashanah.

The long, smooth Tekiah is a symbol of purity, innocence and perfection. On the other hand the broken Teruah sounds are the challenges of life. They represent darkness, confusion, complication and frustration.

Our life begins with a Tekia. We are born with a natural purity, with an untainted soul that is perfect and unchallenged. The innocence of a new born baby reflects the purity and holiness of the soul.

But inevitably, sooner or later, the long and beautiful Tekia is replaced

by the broken sounds of the Terua. We begin to experience confusion, face difficulties, and are suddenly thrown into the ups and downs of a complicated and sometimes challenging existence.

But this is the power of Rosh Hashana. When we begin a fresh new year, the past is not always so positive. Not everything in the last year might have been a Tekia. But on this special day we can turn it all around. We can learn from last year's experiences and make the future more positive. We can turn challenge into opportunity; transform the bad into good and darkness into light, using difficulty and confusion as growth tools to emerge as stronger and deeper human beings.

And so we conclude with a Tekia again.

Out of the Terua emerges a greater, stronger and deeper Tekia than the one we began with. Light that comes from darkness is brighter than natural light. Smoothness and purity that emerges from challenge is deeper and stronger than the natural innocence that we experience at birth.

Hence the Shofar pattern: Tekia – Terua – Tekia.

*Rabbi Michoel Gourarie lectures on a wide range of topics with a special emphasis on Personal Growth and Self Development. He is the director of "Bina" in Sydney, Australia.*

*Art by Yamit Presman. Yamit is a quilling artist who takes her inspiration from Jewish traditions, Judaism as a whole, and especially from Chasidism. @quilling\_artist1, yamit.presman@gmail.com.*



# SLICE OF LIFE

## My 9/11 Rosh Hashana by Rabbi Menachem Posner



The image is seared into my mind. Walking over the Williamsburg Bridge from Brooklyn to Manhattan in the early morning, looking to the right, and seeing giant plumes of smoke rising from the spot where the Twin Towers had stood just days before.

New Yorkers don't generally talk to strangers. But everything was different in those days after 9/11. We were one city, one people. The fear had touched us all in a place that was deeper than race, socioeconomic status or culture. We were all humans in need of comfort.

My friend Dani and I crossed the bridge together with a cyclist. He told us that he was going away. He did not know where, and he didn't care. He just needed to get out of New York to escape the terrible destruction that had happened there.

But we weren't going far. It was the first day of Rosh Hashana, and I was on my way to blow shofar for a small congregation of elderly retirees in Gramercy Park.

In my hand, I had a leather bag with a shofar inside of it. Since I did not yet own a shofar of my own (I was 18 at the time), I had borrowed one from my aunt and uncle. Its mouthpiece was riddled with tooth marks made by my overenthusiastic cousins, but it made a fine sound. I had spent a few hours in my dorm room practicing the day before, and I was sure that I would be able to blow it well.

I was accompanied by Dani, whom I had met in Russia the summer before, when we were co-

counselors at the Chabad camp outside of Moscow. His parents were longtime refuseniks, and he knew Russian even though he had grown up in Israel. I, on the other hand, had learned a handful of words from my campers. Our common language was Hebrew, and we struck up a friendship (today, he is a Chabad emissary in S. Petersburg, and we still keep in touch).

And there we walked in the early dawn light, smelling the smoke of destruction and wondering how exactly the world would survive the new year.

When we arrived at the synagogue – a narrow affair sandwiched between walk-up apartments, Chinese laundries and convenience stores – we felt like we were sucked into a different era.

The once-grand but never large lobby bore fading photos of the congregation's Hebrew school, none more recent than the 1970s, and the smell of musty carpets and aged books pervaded the building.

As we entered the sanctuary (according to a plaque on the wall it had been paneled in the 1950s), we saw perhaps a half-dozen men scattered throughout the room. Some pews were so covered with old books and pamphlets, there was no room to sit. Near the front sat the rabbi.

Wrapped in his tallit, the rabbi turned to greet us. He wore a white kittel with silver braid, the likes of which I had never seen before, which seemed to be nearly as old as he was. He wore his beard in a neatly kept goatee. Known in Yiddish as a *komatz berdel*, the style had been popular among rabbis decades before I was born.

"We don't hurry on Rosh Hashana," he said in Yiddish, apparently apologizing for the weak showing. "By the time we are ready to start, we will have several dozen people here."

He spoke with a grand confidence that meshed well with his strong Hungarian-Jewish accent. We soon learned that he had once been a well-known Yiddish radio personality and political activist who was famed for his oratory skills.

The rabbi began the service by belting out "*Adon Olam*" in a tune I had never heard before but which has stuck with me until this day. One by one, worshippers trickled in. I do not know if the rabbi's "several dozen" ever materialized, but there was a motley crew of Jews – the men downstairs and the women above – mostly in their 70s and 80s.

After Torah reading, it was time for the rabbi's sermon. He spoke powerfully about "the evil men who knocked down those towers," assuring his congregation (and perhaps himself) that G-d would surely bring them to justice.

It would be the rabbi's first year not blowing the

shofar himself, and he was not quite ready to give up his sacred duty. He stood with me at the bimah in the center of the sanctuary and read along with me the mystical prayers said by the shofar-blower.

After reciting the blessings, I closed my eyes and blew with all my might. I blew for the souls that had been cruelly snuffed out on 9/11. I blew for the congregation, wishing them another year of life and health. I blew for my generation, realizing that we were entering into an era when security was not something that we could ever take for granted. And I blew for G-d, who had a reason for the hammer-blow that had rammed into our world.

As we chatted with the congregants after services, it became clear that they were agitated and not very clear about what was happening just a few blocks away. "It's that zero ground thing," offered one woman, referring to the site of the attacks, which had been dubbed ground zero. "That's why there are so few people in shul; they were scared away by that zero ground."

There was a man in the synagogue from Brooklyn who was spending the holiday with his elderly mother in a nearby Beth Israel Hospital. He asked us to accompany him there to blow shofar for her and for another man who was in the hospital.

As we approached the hospital, we were greeted by walls covered with photocopied pages, each one with a photo, name, and brief description of an individual – a stark reminder of the terrible trauma that Manhattan was living through. People were still missing under the rubble, and family members were desperate for news.

We blew shofar for the two elderly people and shared a meal with their children. Homemade gefilte fish, sweetmeats and compote were a much-welcomed repast at that time of the afternoon.

Dani and I then spent the rest of the afternoon walking through the halls of the hospital, offering to blow shofar for any Jews who had not heard it. Along the way we met the Jewish chaplain, and he was happy to assign us certain floors, thus easing his burden.

We returned the following day for a repeat performance, and then remained in Manhattan until nightfall when we took a car service back home.

As we rode back to Brooklyn, the driver played the radio. For the first time since the attacks, there was more than just news updates. Ads, talk shows, the regular programming was coming back on the air. It felt good to hear the usual irreverence of New York AM radio. It meant that we were still alive, still ourselves.

And with that, we were ready for the Jewish year.

*Copyright and reprinted with permission of Chabad.org. Rabbi Posner is staff editor at Chabad.org, the world's largest Jewish informational website. He resides in Chicago, Ill., with his family.*

## Rosh Hashana and Shofar

Many Chabad-Lubavitch Centers world-wide have always offered special outdoor Shofar Blowing ceremonies on Rosh Hashana. To find a Shofar service for Rosh Hashana day Tuesday, September 7 or Wednesday, September 8, or services near you, visit [chabad.org](http://chabad.org).

## New Emissaries

**Rabbi Yisroel and and Mussie Gottlieb** are new emissaries in **Kiryat Gat, Israel**. They are specifically involved with the 10,000 Russian speaking residents of the city.

**Rabbi Nissi and Mushka Naparstek** are opening a new Chabad Center in **Maple Grove, Minnesota**. Maple Grove is the eighth largest city in the state of Minnesota and is considered the retail, cultural and medical center of the northwest region of the area.

## Today Is...

28 Elul

"G-d's blessing brings wealth."<sup>1</sup> This is so in general, but especially to whoever gives of his time to occupy himself with the community's needs in matters of charity and strengthening Judaism; as the saying goes, "G-d does not remain in debt". For every good thing a person does, he is recompensed grandly by G-d, with children, health and livelihood, in abundance.



# The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Freely translated

In the Days of Selichoth 5725 [1965]

To the Sons and Daughters of Our People Israel, Everywhere, G-d bless you all!

We are at the threshold of a Shemittah Year (the seventh and sanctified "Sabbatical" year in the cycle of years); may it be a good one for all of us, amidst our people Israel.

One of the central teachings of Shemittah is conveyed in the order of the verses and words by which the Torah defines the institution of Shemitta, namely: "When you will come into the land... the earth shall rest a Sabbath unto G-d. Six years shalt thou plant thy field," etc. (Lev. 25:2-3)

The order in the text seems to be reversed, for the six work years precede the Sabbatical rest year, and not vice versa. Hence, the text should have first mentioned the six years of planting, and then decree the resting.

However, order in Torah is also Torah ("instruction"). The arrangement in the text mentioned above, relating to Shemittah, is significant and instructive in that it teaches the proper approach to life. It is expressed as follows:

When one "comes into the land" and desires to establish his way of life, which involves "working the soil," it is necessary to bear in mind that first and foremost, as an idea and as a goal, is "Sabbath unto G-d"; not the "earthly" and material, but the spiritual and sacred. This approach will ensure one against being submerged by the material and mundane aspects of life. Moreover, bearing constantly in mind the above idea and goal will transform the six drab working years; they will lose much of their drabness and become more refined and meaningful. Furthermore, the change and elevation of the six years will raise to a higher plane also the seventh year: from a "Shabbos unto G-d" to a "Sabbath of Sabbaths" unto G-d (v. 4), with a dedication and solemnity of a higher order.

Similarly, in the daily life there are those aspects which have to do with material preoccupation (to earn a livelihood, etc.) and "common" necessities, such as eating and

drinking, etc. – all those aspects wherein there is "no preeminence in man over animal." But there is also the area of "earthly rest" - of breaking away from the mundane living. Here, too, the teaching of Shemittah is that it is necessary to begin the day with the idea and approach that, although it may be necessary later in the day to engage in "mundane" activities, the essence and purpose of these things are – to attain a "Sabbath unto G-d." In this way, even the mundane aspects will attain refinement and real content, while the aspects of holiness and G-dliness will be intensified and elevated to a higher order. This is the way to attain a complete and harmonious life.

Standing on the threshold of the Shemittah Year, we pray that the Alm-ghty help each and everyone, man and woman, to begin the year with the above-mentioned approach: That not the material, but the spiritual is the essence and goal in life; that "the earthly," the material has a *raison d'être* only if it is permeated with the idea of "the earth shall rest a Sabbath unto G-d" - which is when the material serves and fulfills the higher aspirations of holiness and G-dliness. It is only then that all the days in the year, and all the activities of each day, will reflect "the preeminence of man over animal" and give evidence that man was created in the Divine "image and likeness," living accordingly; while those moments and periods which are characterized as "Shabbos" will in turn rise to the sublime heights of "Sabbath of Sabbaths."

Then will surely also be fulfilled the Divine blessing that goes with Shemittah - "And I will command My blessing upon you" (v. 21) - in a supernatural way.

Rosh Hashana is the day to make the firm and lasting resolution to implement the above approach. It is the day when the first man was created in the Divine image and likeness; the day when he gained mastery over all of Nature and elevated all Creation to the recognition of the Sovereignty of the Creator with the call, "Come, let us worship, and bow down, and kneel before G-d our Maker" (Ps. 95:6); The day when we pray for the realization of G-d's Kingdom on earth, "reign, in Thy Glory, upon all the world... and let everyone who has a breath in his nostrils declare, 'G-d, the G-d of Israel, is King, and His Kingdom rules everything!'"

With the blessing of Kesivo Vachasimo Toivo [to be inscribed and sealed for good]

For a happy and pleasant year blessed with the joy of children, life and ample sustenance,

will literally take hold with His hand every person... as it states, 'You shall be gathered one by one, Children of Israel.' "As we know that the Redemption will come about through repentance, the Torah clearly promises that every single Jew will ultimately return to G-d in repentance, as it states, "For not even one will be banished." (Tanya)

# MOSHIACH MATTERS

Then the L-rd your G-d will turn your captivity (Deut. 30:3) Rashi notes this means that "G-d

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

With Rosh Hashana we enter the year of 5782, spelled out in Hebrew תשפ"ב. May this year be "a year of "wonders in everything – פלאות בכל" and:

שנת אהה תקום חרות ציון, שנת "אפגליטיקוויט" בעניני משיח וגאולה. שנת אמונה בה' ובמשה עבדו. שנת ארו עם עניי שמיא. שנת אראנו נפלאות. שנת נפלאות בכל. שנת בנין בית המקדש. שנת בטחון. שנת נפלאות גדולות. שנת גאולה האמתית והשליטה. שנת נפלאות גדולות. שנת דרו צנח. שנת דור השביעי דור הגאולה. שנת דור מלך ישראל חי וקיים. שנת הקינו ורגנו שוכני עפי והוא בראשם. שנת הנה משיח בא ובכר בא. שנת התגלות מלך המשיח. שנת הריא יגאלנו. שנת ויאמינו בה' ומה עבדו. שנת זו יתמנן. שנת נפלאות חרותנו. שנת שיר הרוח. שנת טובה מושפעת רחבה (בלשון הרמב"ם). שנת יחי המלך. שנת כתיבה וחתמה טובה. שנת כינורו של משיח. שנת לימוד תורתו של משיח. שנת מלך המשיח. שנת יבוא מנחם לחוננו. שנת נפלאות. שנת נסים גלויים. שנת נחמה בכלליים. שנת נסילות. שנת סיום יסורי הגלות. שנת נילוי אור אין סוף. שנת ערבים היגיע זמן גאולתכם. שנת פירות השב ירושלים. שנת צמח דור עבדך. שנת קבוצ גלויות. שנת קבלת מלכותו על ידי העם. שנת ראש בני ישראל. שנת שלום. שנת שיר רוש. שנת שפרו של משיח. שנת שלימות התורה. שנת שלימות העם ושלמות הארץ. שנת תחיית המתים. שנת תורה חדשה מאתי תצא.

A year of "Arise and have mercy on Zion,"... uplifted in matters of Moshiach and the Redemption... faith in G-d and Moses His servant... traveling with the Heavenly clouds... Revealed Wonders; Wonders in Everything... the building of the Holy Temple... trust; Great wonders... the true and complete Redemption; Dignified Wonders... victory... the seventh generation is the generation of Redemption... King David lives and is eternal; "Those who rest in the dust will arise and sing and he will lead them"... Moshiach is coming and he has already come... the revelation of Moshiach; "He will redeem us"... "And they believed in G-d and in Moses His servant"; "This one will comfort us"; the wonders of true freedom... a new song; an abundance of good (Rambam); the king shall live; inscribed and sealed for a good year... the harp of Moshiach; learning Moshiach's teachings; the coming of Menachem who will comfort us... the King Moshiach; wonders... revealed miracles... a double portion; treasures... the completion and end of exile... the revelation of the Infinite Divine Light; "Humble ones, the time of your Redemption has arrived"; "Jerusalem will dwell in open space"; Your servant David will go forth; the ingathering of the exiles... acceptance of his sovereignty by the people; Rebbe - Rosh B'nei Yisrael; peace... a new song... Moshiach's shofar... unity of the Torah, unity of the Jewish people, unity of the land of Israel; Resurrection of the Dead... "A new Torah will come from Me"

Shmuel Butman

## L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חי'ה י מושקא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.

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# IT HAPPENED ONCE

The shofar blowing “tekiyot” of Reb Yoel Chaim Weissfinger were legendary among the Jews of the Old City of Jerusalem. Every year on Rosh Hashana, hundreds of people would flock to his synagogue for the unique experience of hearing him sound the shofar. It was also rumored that the ancient ram’s horn had a long and colorful history.

When Reb Yoel Chaim passed away a few days after Yom Kippur in 5674 (1913) he left behind two sons, Shimon and Leibel. But which one should inherit their father’s shofar, and along with it, the honor of blowing it in shul? In the end a compromise was reached: Shimon, the eldest son, inherited the small grocery store his father had owned, while Leibel, the younger brother who was also a Torah scholar, inherited the prized shofar.

Several years later Shimon sold the grocery store and emigrated to America, where he started his own business. The business flourished, and soon Shimon was a wealthy man.

In the meantime, a war broke out between the English and the Ottoman Turks in the Holy Land. One day Leibel, who was an English citizen, was walking when he was captured by Turkish soldiers, thrown into jail, and deported to Egypt. The only possession he took along was his father’s shofar.

Not long afterward, a ship arrived in the Holy Land with a cargo of food donated by American Jews for their less fortunate brethren. Among the passengers was a Mr. Sam White, one of the directors of the aid committee. Before he anglicized his name, Mr. White had been known as Shimon Weissfinger.

When Sam learned what had happened to his brother he immediately set sail for Egypt and, with G-d’s help, he managed to locate him. Sam gave Leibel a large sum of money, which enabled him to return home and get back on his feet.

On the day Sam was to leave for America, Leibel, overcome by emotion, presented his older brother with their father’s shofar as a token of his gratitude. Sam was very touched, and the whole way home kept the treasured object in full sight. Indeed, the shofar was the only thing he talked about upon his arrival. But when he went to show it to his friends and family he almost fainted: it was nowhere to be found! The ancient shofar had somehow disappeared.

Years passed, and the financial circumstances of the Jews of Jerusalem deteriorated even further. Leibel and his family emigrated to Poland, where he found a position as Rabbi in a small village. Perhaps, he hoped and prayed, his worries were over.

But such was not to be, as the Second World War soon erupted. The Germans, may their names be erased, invaded Poland. Over the next few years Leibel endured the tortures of the Holocaust, but miraculously survived. When the War ended he spent several years wandering from one D.P. camp to the next, hoping to eventually return to Israel.

One Rosh Hashana eve the group of Jewish refugees with whom he was traveling arrived at the home of a kindly Italian farmer who agreed to let the group stay over Yom Tov. The refugees were saddened by the fact that they had no shofar, but grateful for the opportunity to pray together.

Rosh Hashana came and went. Leibel and his friends were about to depart when the Italian farmer asked them to sit down for a minute. “I have something on my conscience that has been bothering me for years,” he told them. “I’d like to get it off my chest once and for all...”

“Many years ago I was a seaman on a ship that sailed from Palestine to America. One of the passengers was a wealthy American Jew, who held on to a small package the whole time as if guarding a great treasure. When the ship docked in America it was a tumultuous scene, and I’m ashamed to say that I seized the opportunity to steal it. But I was very disappointed when I opened it up, because all it contained was this strange-looking thing...” The farmer then withdrew a very old shofar from its case.

“I know that this is some kind of Jewish object, and for years I’ve been hoping to meet

some Jews so I could give it back. Please take it.”

Dismayed that the farmer hadn’t mentioned it before Rosh Hashana, no one noticed that Leibel Weissfinger had paled. Indeed, he was white as a ghost - for it was none other than his father’s shofar!

When he had recovered enough to speak, Leibel told everyone the amazing story of the shofar, whereupon it was their turn to be speechless...

Leibel eventually returned to Jerusalem, where he was reunited with his brother. (In the wake of the Holocaust, Sam had sold his business in America and returned to the Holy Land; he had also reverted to the name of Shimon Weissfinger.)

The reunion was particularly emotional, especially when Leibel showed his elder brother the long-lost shofar and told him how it had come to him. And everyone marveled over the mysterious ways of Divine Providence.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

on the weekly Torah portion

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**Rosh Hashana**  
 The literal translation of Rosh Hashana is “head of the year.” Just as the head effects the rest of the body, so too does Rosh Hashana effect the rest of the year. On Rosh Hashana we resolve to better ourselves in the coming year. Also, the service of Rosh Hashana revolves around recognizing the sovereignty of G-d, which establishes an even deeper connection between man and G-d that is carried over throughout the year. (*Likutei Sichot*)

**Acceptance of the yoke heaven (kabalat ol)**  
 Throughout the year, when a Jew accepts upon himself the yoke of heaven (especially by reciting the Shema), he establishes the foundation and starting point for his conduct the rest of the day. However, when we accept G-d’s sovereignty on Rosh Hashana, it not only forms the foundation of our Divine service but is the essence of the day itself. (*Likutei Sichot*)

**Accepting G-d’s Kingship**  
 On Rosh Hashana we accept G-d’s kingship over the world, metaphorically erecting a “structure of sovereignty.” To construct a physical building, three building materials are used: stones, earth (dust) and water. In the spiritual sense, these correspond to the letters of the prayer book, a sense of humility, and our tears. By reciting our prayers humbly on Rosh Hashana and with tears that come from the heart, we establish G-d’s Kingship over all of creation. (*Sefer Maamarim Kuntreisim*)

Dedicated in Honor of good friends of  
 the Lubavitch Youth Organization  
**Mr. Michael and Fiona Scharf**  
 Wishing you a Gemar chasima tova,  
 Shana Tova U'mesuka, A good, sweet year



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