



פרשת ראש השנה
תשרי תשפ"ב

THE AVODAH OF THE SHEMITTAH YEAR

The new year, 5782 is a Shemittah year, a year that the Torah describes as a Shabbos for Hashem.

During the Shemittah year, the farmers in Eretz Yisroel were not permitted to work the land. Free from their agricultural responsibilities, they were able to spend the year immersed in the study of Torah.

For those of us who live in Chutz LaAretz or those who are not farmers, our work continues business as usual.

Nonetheless, the theme of the year is 'שבת לה'. No matter what line of work we are in, the Avodah and spiritual message of Shemittah applies to all of us.

This year is a year to increase in our Torah learning, to be a little less involved in work and to spend more time in the Beis Hamidrash.

Rosh Hashona is a time for new resolutions. Let's connect to the special energy of this year by committing to increase our learning and shiur attendance.

Hashem assures the farmers that if they abstain from work in the Shemittah year, He will bless their crops and provide for them in a miraculous way.

When we make resolutions to increase our learning, Hashem will take care of us and bless us with ample Parnoso.



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Acronyms for the new year

It is customary to make acronyms (Roshei Teivos) using the letters of the new year, to connect the year with phrases that are blessings, messages and themes for the new year and its Avodah.

The new year that begins tonight is 5782 - תשפ"ב. Below are a few Roshei Teivos for the new year which we pray will be realised this year.

תהא שנת פלאות בה / תהא שנת פלאות בכל

In the year 5752 - תשנ"ב, the Rebbe proclaimed the year תהא שנת נפלאות or תהא שנת נפלאות בה בכל. That it should be a year in which wonders (Niflaos) occur or that there be wonders in everything.

תהא שנת פלאות also means wonders. This year should be a year filled with wonders and miracles for the entire Jewish people in everything.

פלא also means that which is completely beyond understanding. In Chassidus, פלא refers to the lofty Sefira of Kesser, the transcendent levels of G-dliness that will be revealed in the times of Moshiach.

תהא שנת פדה בשלום

Many of the Yud Tes Kislev Maamarim are based on the Posuk **פדה בשלום נפשי**, He has redeemed my soul in peace. These words were said by King David in Tehillim, describing his salvation from his battles.

The Alter Rebbe connected his liberation, which is celebrated as the Rosh Hashona of Chassidus, with these words.

Chassidus explains that there can be a redemption in a manner of war and a redemption in a way of peace.

The redemption is a way of battle is where we need to engage and fight against negativity. Internally, we fight this battle with the negativity of the Yetzer Hara on the conscious levels of our souls, using our intellect and emotions to fight the desires and temptations of the Yetzer Hara.

The redemption is a way of peace does not require a fight or engagement. When we reveal the essence of the Neshama which is bound up in oneness with Hashem, any negativity disappears automatically. We rise completely above all challenges, with no need to struggle and engage with them,

These two ideas exist within Torah. When we learn the revealed dimension of Torah, Talmud and Halacha, we discuss worldly things and matters that are forbidden

and permissible. Through the our Torah study we affect a refinement and elevation.

The true redemption in peace is through Pnimius Hatorah. Pnimius Hatorah reveals how everything is really G-dliness. If so, there is no negative to fight against.

May this year be a year of increased learning of Torah and may we experience redemption from all of our struggles in a way of peace.

תהא שנת בקשו פני

In the Tehillim Ledovid Hashem Ori that we say from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Hoshana Rabbah, Kind David says **לך אמר לבי בקשו פני את פניך ה' אבקש** - My heart speaks for You saying "seek My presence", Hashem I seek Your presence.

Chassidus explains the deeper meaning of this verse. The word פני meaning face or presence, is also related to the word פנימיות, meaning the internal dimension. The soul has both an external and internal dimension and in G-dly light there are external and internal levels.

The verse talks about פני - "my Pnimius" and פניך - "Your Pnimius". "My Pnimius" refers to the essence of the Neshama, the Yechida. "Your Pnimius" refers to the essence of Hashem.

Elul and Tishrei is a time where we search for our Pnimius, seeking to reveal and get in touch with our inner core of the Neshama, that is one with Hashem and desires only connection to Hashem.

Through this Avodah of revealing our Pnimius, we seek and reach Your Pnimius Hashem. May this year be a year where we connect to Hashem **בפנים בפנים**.

תהא שנת פנים בפנים

The Torah describes how at Matan Torah, Hashem spoke to the Jewish people; **פנים בפנים דבר ה' עמכם**, Hashem spoke to you face to face. This describes a direct and meaningful connection

If we interpret the word פנים as Pnimius, the verse means that at Matan Torah, Hashem communicated with us and radiated from His Pnimius to our Pnimius,

תהא שנת ביאת פורץ

The Novi refers to Moshiach as the Poretz, the one who breaks through boundaries. May this be the year of the coming of the Poretz, to breach through the darkness of Golus and bring us to the Geulah.

May Hashem not make a Pruzbul

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

On Erev Rosh Hashona this year we made a Pruzbul, in accordance with the ruling of the Alter Rebbe that the Pruzbul should be made on the eve of the Shemittah year, rather than at its end.

In a number of years, after making a Pruzbul, the Rebbe would give a Brocha that just as we have made a Pruzbul down here, may Hashem not make a Pruzbul Above.

What is the meaning of this Brocha?

The Shemittah year cancels out debts. This applies in Eretz Yisroel and Chutz Laaretz alike. Today the force of this Mitzvah is only Rabbinic. The cancellation only takes effect at the end of the year, but already from Rosh Hashona one may no longer demand repayment.

When Hillel saw that lenders were hesitant and refusing to lend money (in violation of the Torah's warning), he instituted a halachic remedy referred to as a Pruzbul. By handing one's loans to the Beis Din and stating either verbally or in writing I am giving my loans to you that I may collect them whenever I desire, they are no longer cancelled out by Shemittah and may be collected at a later date.

We are all borrowers

Pirkei Avos (3:16) teaches; the store is open and the storekeeper extends on credit the ledger is open and the hand records. Whoever wishes to borrow let them come and borrow.

A loan has 2 key features. Unlike an item which is borrowed where the actual object must be returned, a loan may be spent the borrower sees fit. But a loan is not a gift and must eventually be repaid.

Hashem gives us all of our blessings on credit; our health, our wealth and our children. These are on loan to us and we are free to decide how we will use them. But eventually the loan needs to be paid back in full.

We repay Hashem's blessing for children by raising and educating our children to be dedicated to Hashem and keeping His Torah and Mitzvos. Our blessing for life and good health is repaid by using our time to the fullest in serving Hashem. The blessing of wealth and sustenance is repaid through giving Tzedakah.

The month of Elul is referred to as the Chodesh Hacheshbon, a month of spiritual stocktake. We go through the balance sheets of our

souls and our Avodah to see where we stand as the 'fiscal year' draws to its close. With an honest accounting we often find ourselves in the red. We have asked Hashem for so much and have benefited from all of the blessings extended to us on credit, spending them as we see fit. But we cannot keep borrowing without paying in off.

The Mishna continues; the collectors are constantly on the job and they collect payment from a person with or without their consent and they have support for their actions. The judgement is a true judgement.

There's no denying these loans; the ledger keeps an accurate record and as we say in our Rosh Hashona Tefillos, All is revealed and known before You. The debt-collectors of Heaven are always at work, but as the Yomim Noraim approach, their efforts intensify.

The feeling of being in debt is unpleasant to say the least. When the first, second and final warnings stamped in deep red ink arrive, followed by threats of legal action, repossession and foreclosure, one feels as though they are drowning with no way to escape the cycle.

What is our recourse?

Our sages explain that Hashem observes the very Mitzvos which He commands us to keep.

Just as our personal debts are cancelled by Shemittah, Hashem too forgoes the debts which we have accrued.

The Shemittah is a year where like the farmers in Eretz Yisroel, we detach ourselves from worldly affairs to connect ourselves more deeply to Hashem, prompting Hashem to respond with a full waiver.

Of course we cannot rely on this as an excuse. A borrower needs to try to repay their debts and even after Shemittah, one who repays their debts the sages are pleased with them (Mishna Shviis 10:9). But when you genuinely can't, Shemittah is a life-saver.

But what if Hashem makes a Pruzbul?

We often refer to a Beis Din Shel Maalah, a supernal Heavenly court. What is it? Who are the judges? How can there be a judiciary Above other than Hashem? So with whom would He make a Pruzbul?

The Beis Din Shel Maalah is not a separate force. It represents a manner in which Hashem

relates to us in a way of Din - judgement. A Din is exacting. It is absolute - black and white. Din is about what is true. Compassion, consideration and appeals for clemency are not a feature of Din. And as the Dayan HaEmes, the True Judge, His Din is certainly Emes. Like a Pruzbul, in this mode of relationship, the debts will remain.

But Hashem can also relate to us in a manner which circumvents the Beis Din Shel Maalah. This is described as *lifnim mishuras hadin*, acting beyond the letter-of-the-law of strict justice. If we are dealing with Hashem Himself, beyond the 'jurisdiction' of the Heavenly court, our debts will be erased.

How do we keep our debts out of the Beis Din?

On the verse Hashem Tzilcha (Tehillim 23), The Baal Shem Tov comments that Hashem is like our shadow. Just as a shadow mimics and mirrors our movements, so too the manner in which Hashem relates to us will be commensurate and mirror how we relate to Him.

If we act towards Hashem and approach our Torah obligations in a way of Din, then the response from Above is one of Din. If we are exacting, looking to follow the letter of the law; if we make cheshbonos, looking to be Yotzai our obligations in a legalistic sense, then Hashem will relate to us in kind through the Beis Din Shel Maalah.

But when we go beyond the letter-of-the-law in our Avodah, not looking to suffice with what's good enough to discharge our obligations, Hashem will do the same. When our Mitzvos are not just by force of habit or dry sense of obligation, but are infused with *chayus* and *Hiddur Mitzvah*, we go beyond our limitations. Through this we connect to Hashem Himself and Hashem will go beyond the *shuras hadin*. When the debts are not passed on to the Beis Din, they will be willingly, lovingly and completely withdrawn.

Once we are no longer in debt, the credit-line is open again and Hashem will extend to us blessings for everything we need, materially and spiritually.

May Hashem cancel out all of our debts and shower us with a new credit-line of *Brachos* for the coming year, in health, wealth and children and in all matters both materially and spiritually.