



When Rosh HaShana and Shabbat Intersect

When Rosh HaShana falls out on Shabbat, as it does this year, we add in all the Amida prayers as well as in Kiddush, the word, B'AHAVA, with love. Apparently, not everyone was in favor of this inclusion. Because Rosh HaShana is so identified as the YOM HADIN, the Day of Judgment, it would appear to be incompatible with Gd's love for us. This was the view of the Levush as quoted by the Taz (O.C. 582:3). Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, takes strong issue with this opinion and rules definitively (as is our common practice) that AHAVA must be included in our prayers. He then brings a variety of sources that prove, quite to the contrary, that judgment and love are not at all mutually exclusive (Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:38:7).

How may we understand, theologically, Rav Moshe's position? A close examination of Ramban's fascinating interpretation of the phrase, ZICHRON T'RU'A, remembering the t'ru'a sound", might yield an insightful answer. The Talmud (Rosh

HaShana 29b) asserts that this expression, found in the Torah (Vayikra 23:24), refers to the occurrence of Rosh HaShana on Shabbat when the shofar is not blown; it is only remembered. Ramban, while certainly aware of this Gemara, chooses to offer a very different, somewhat kabbalistic, understanding of this phrase. Here is how Rav Soloveitchik unpacked Ramban's novel interpretation.

On Rosh HaShana, we constantly refer to HaShem as MELECH, the King. It is perhaps the most ubiquitous denomination of Gd in the Rosh HaShana liturgy. Gd's kingship, however, can be manifest in two dimensions. In the cosmos, HaShem's MALCHUT is evident in the immutable laws of nature. This is pure judgment, in the sense that these laws are uncompromising and unalterable in their expression, allowing for no exceptions. As an example: should one violate the law of gravity and jump off a cliff, the tragic result is inevitable. But HaShem also reveals Himself within the Jewish People. His regency, His majesty is manifest when His Chosen People follow in His ways and, in so doing, testify and proclaim Gd's existence as the Master of the Universe. Why else would a person keep kosher, observe Shabbat, behave ethically above and beyond what is normally expected, unless the

Jew felt bound by a higher law, legislated by a Higher Authority?

With this albeit brief kabbalistic analysis, we turn to the word, T'RU'A. In the view of Ramban, the word can have two very different meanings. First, T'ru'a can denote strict unmitigated judgment. On Rosh HaShana even the angels quake with fear and trembling. And as far as man is concerned, who indeed can remain guiltless in the eyes of the Almighty?! But T'ru'a can have another meaning. It can also denote friendship, as in the Hebrew REI-UT (Rashi on Bamidbar 23:21). When the Jewish People engage in t'shuva, and sincerely attempt to connect with HaShem by repairing and elevating their religious and moral behavior, the first meaning of T'ru'a gives way to the second, and HaShem softens the rigid, inflexible DIN with the soothing, forgiving attribute of mercy. No wonder Ramban denominates Rosh HaShana as YOM HADIN B'RACHAMIM.

For Ramban then, the phrase ZICH-RON T'RU'A means that with the sounding of the shofar, we are remembered before HaShem; remembered in the sense of fondness before Gd. Even more, as the Talmud declares (Rosh HaShana 26a), with the sound of the shofar, we are virtually transported into the Temple's Holy of Holies itself! There can be no greater closeness to HaShem than that sacred encounter.

If, by virtue of the T'ru'a, we are reminded of HaShem's love for us, then it should be clear why the insertion of the word B'AHAVA is added to our prayer when Rosh HaShana falls out on Shabbat. Shabbat is that special sign between Gd and the Jewish people (Sh'mot 31:17) that finds expression in His love for us. Every week, HaShem, along with His ministering angels, visits us in our humble abode. It is a day exclusively devoted to Gd through prayer and study. The day is a fundamental reminder of that special covenant which binds us to Gd in an intimate caring relationship. No wonder then that when Rosh HaShana occurs on Shabbat, the shofar is not blown because there can be no better substitute for the shofar than Shabbat. Shabbat obviates the need for shofar because the intense love, the AHAVA, that so defines Shabbat is exactly what the T'ru'a of the shofar is meant to convey.

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We come to the end of another year, this one quite difficult and trying. So many of our sacred beliefs are under assault, not to speak of the rise of antisemitism and the many dangers facing our beloved State of Israel. We dare not conclude, however, that the stresses and anxieties generated by these cultural challenges and worrisome events contradict Gd's compas-

sion for us. As Rav Moshe asserts, Gd's judgment and His love do not negate one another. Precisely because HaShem sees us as His children, His chastisement of us - His DIN - much like a parent's chastising of a mischievous child, is itself an expression of how much He cares for us - His AHAVA. Of course, Gd's Will is inscrutable and we cannot attempt to fathom the "why" of all this. But, as Rav Soloveitchik taught us, we can and must respond. The T'ru'a of the shofar challenges each of us to permit HaShem's Presence to be revealed through our deeds and emotions. Put differently, it obligates us to be a living Kiddush HaShem in all our behaviors, to sanctify HaShem in our every action, especially toward others. It means to ask ourselves: what would Gd want me to do in this situation; would He approve of what I'm about to do; would He be proud of how I treat others: my spouse, my children, my friends?

If we can cultivate a mindset that creates an awareness of SHIVITI HASHEM... - I set the Lord before me always!" (T'hilim 16:8), then we can succeed in rectifying and elevating our behavior for the better. One never can know, as Rambam has asserted, that the deeds of one person can have a repercussive effect upon the entire world. (Hilchot T'shuva 3:4) We must never underestimate the lasting and extraor-

dinary significance of what may appear to be a small good deed. In the eyes of HaShem, it may very well "tip the scales" and change the world!

May the coming New Year bring us all good health, peace and prosperity. And may it be the year that because "the Name of HaShem will be proclaimed over you ..." (D'varim 28:10), we will merit the "coming of Mashiach, speedily in our days."

Wishing everyone a  
K'TIVA VACHATIMA TOVA  
a sweet and joyous year!