

דרכים בשנה ראש השנה

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We are very impressed with 20/20 vision. If you go to the eye doctor and he tells you that you have 20/20 eyesight, you walk out feeling pretty good about yourself. You can read the bottom line on the chart, see the street sign from a distance, and maybe even find your glasses when they are sitting on top of your head. But having good eyesight does not necessarily mean that you have good vision.

The pasuk says, **החכם עיניו בראשו**, “The wise man's eyes are in his head.” At first glance, this sounds like one of those statements that makes you wonder what the alternative is. Where else would his eyes be? The Sfas Emes connects this pasuk to Rosh Hashanah, the **rosh**, the head and beginning of the year. He points out something fascinating about the eye itself: “עיקר ראיות העין מתוך החושך והשחור שבו.” The eye sees through the darkness and blackness within it. The very darkness inside the eye is part of what allows it to see. He connects this to Rosh Hashanah, which is called **בכסה**, a time of concealment. We do not know what the coming year will bring, but that does not mean there is nothing to see. The wise person, **עיניו בראשו**, looks back to his root, to the Torah and the Avos, and remembers where he comes from and Who is really running the picture.

We spend our lives looking at what happened yesterday, what is happening today, the numbers, the circumstances, the people around us and the road ahead. And then we make a very natural mistake: we assume that because we can see something, we understand it. A person can have 20/20 eyesight and still have terrible vision. He sees a roadblock or a closed door and thinks it is the end. He sees someone else's hatzlocha, shidduch or whatever, you fill in the blank, and thinks he has been left behind. A difficult nisayon comes along and he wonders why Hashem is doing this to him. The eyes say, “This is what I see.” Emunah says, **“There is more to the picture.”**

Chazal tell us that we say Malchuyos **“כדי שתמליכוני עליכם”**, so that we should crown Hashem as King over us. If Hashem is truly Melech, then I am accepting that His vision is greater than mine. I see one day; He sees the entire year. I see one page; He sees the entire book. I see what was lost; He sees what is being built. Accepting Hashem as Melech means accepting that I do not have to understand everything He understands.

The Akeidah gives us the greatest example. Avraham Avinu is standing on Har Hamoriah with Yitzchak. He has been commanded, **“והעלהו שם לעולה”**, while at the same time he has been promised, **“כי ביצחק יקרא לך זרע”**. He did not know how the two promises would come together. He knew only Who had given him the command. And then, after Avraham demonstrates that he is prepared to trust Hashem without understanding, the Torah says, **“וישא אברהם את עיניו וירא והנה”**, **“איל אחר נאחו בסבך בקרניו”**. Avraham lifted his eyes and saw the ram. The ram was there. The answer was there. Avraham

simply had not seen it yet. Rashi tells us that the ram was **“מוכן היה לכך מששת ימי בראשית”**. The answer had been prepared from the beginning. Avraham's eyes did not create the answer. They finally became capable of seeing what had already been there.

We usually want to see first and then trust. We want Hashem to show us the ending and explain the reason. Then we'll have emunah. The Akeidah teaches us that sometimes it works in the opposite direction. We trust first, and only afterward do we see. That is why the shofar brings us back to the Akeidah. Rabi Avahu taught us, **“תקעו לפני בשופר של איל כדי שאזכור לכם עקידת יצחק בן אברהם, ומעלה אני עליכם כאילו עקדתם עצמכם לפני”**. Every Rosh Hashanah, we stand with our own questions. We don't know what the year will bring, which doors will open or close, or how the pieces of our lives will fit together. The shofar reminds us: **You don't have to see the whole picture. You have to know Who is holding it.**

The Piaseczna Rebbe, writing in the darkness of the Warsaw Ghetto, expressed this idea with a line that is difficult to read without stopping: **“Open eyes see choshech, closed eyes see the Master of the choshech.”** His eyes were open. He was surrounded by one of the darkest periods in human history. There was plenty of darkness to see. But physical sight can only show us the darkness itself. Closing our eyes through emunah can allow us to see the One standing behind it.

And then we reach the final pasuk of Malchuyos: **שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד**. We have spent the entire Malchuyos section proclaiming that Hashem is Melech, and then we arrive at the climax: **ה' אחד**. And what do we do when we say it on a regular day? We cover our eyes. The final expression of accepting Hashem's Kingship is to close our eyes.

Because we have questions. Plenty of them. We look around at the world, at our families and at our own lives, and there are things we simply do not understand. And then we are asked to say **ה' אחד**. So we cover our eyes. Not because we want to see less, but because we want to see more. Our physical eyes show us what is in front of us. Emunah allows us to see beyond it. The eye says, “I don't understand how these pieces fit together.” Emunah says, “I know that they fit together because there is one Melech.”

That is the final step of Malchuyos. We don't only accept Hashem when His Malchus is visible to us. We accept Him even when we have to close our eyes. We close our eyes and say **שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד**. I may not see everything, but I know that there is One. I may not understand everything, but I know Who does. I may not know how the story will unfold, but I know Who is writing it.

We don't need better eyesight. We need better vision. The goal is not to know what tomorrow will bring. The goal is to know Who is bringing tomorrow. Because 20/20 eyesight can show me everything that is happening in front of me. **Emunah shows me Who is behind it.**

And sometimes, when our eyes are covered, we finally see what our eyes were preventing us from seeing.

Wishing you all a טובה וחתימה טובה and ah gut gebentched yur.
לע"נ אברהם בן ר' מרדכי ז"ל מרדכי אפפל