

Rosh Hashanah: Mussaf Zichronot

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After finishing the section of *Malchuyot* in which we coronate Hashem as King, we now begin the section of Zichronot. Since we now just coronated Hashem as our King, we must now answer to Him. Today is a day of judgement and so we need to plead our case before the Master Judge. How do we do that? With *Zichronot* - with memories. The Gemara Rosh Hashanah says – אמרו לפני...זכרונות. כדי שיעלה זכרוניהם לפני " – לטובה" Hashem is now ready to hear what we have to say. We need to bring before Him a litany of memories and cause Hashem to remember why we deserve to be judged favorably. The Gemara tells us that we are not allowed to bring any negative memories in this section. We need to be positive because if we are trying to convince Hashem to acquit us, we need to first prove to ourselves that we have a good case.

Rav Avigdor Nevensal writes that it is important that we explain what we mean by memory. Obviously, Hashem does not forget and then need to remember things, and we do not need to remind Him of anything. We are using a פועל מושאל a borrowed term, just like when we say Hashem loves or hates something or someone. We need to use words we can understand from our own lives to try and understand Hashem in whatever human ways we have at our disposal.

The point of the exercise is not really to remind Hashem because He forgot. It is more to give us the opportunity to analyze our own actions and history as individuals and as a nation. In doing that, we bring ourselves much closer to where Hashem wants us to be. The very exercise is cleansing. Rav Shlomo Wolbe writes:

Analyzing one's actions and revealing one's true self is what makes man complete

בירור המעשים וגילוי אמיתת עצמו הם השלמת האדם עצמו.

According to how much a person has connected to this concept of zichronot, of analyzing his past history, that is how his actions will be measured

לפי קירבתו של אדם ל"זכרונות" נמדדים מעשיו.

This is because a person with zichronot and a person without zichronot (a person who self-analyzes and a person who does not) are completely different in their essence

הרי אדם עם "זכרונות" ואדם בלי "זכרונות" שונים הם זה מזה במהותם...ומה רב ההבדל ביניהם

We reach totally different level of self-awareness by going through this process.

The section of *Zichronot* really has two themes – the individual and the nation. We are pleading our case on two levels here and we need to *daven* just as much for ourselves as individuals as we do as one collective nation. The first level that we focus on is the personal level.

We begin with a very moving paragraph. Personally, this is one of the most moving sections of the whole Rosh Hashanah davening. We make a statement reminding ourselves of Hashem's intense *Hashgacha Pratit*, Divine Providence, and how much He is involved and knows about every single detail of our lives. The author of the *Yesod v'Shores Ha'Avodah* writes

כל מי, שנגע יראת ה בלבו אפילו במקצת יתן את that
 לבו בבכי רב יעצום, *anyone who has even the
 slightest amount of Yirat Hashem in his heart will
 begin pouring out his heart in tears when he says
 this paragraph.*

אתה זוכר מעשה עולם ופוקד כל יצורי קדם. לפניך
 נגלו כל תעלומות והמון נסתרות שמבראשית. כי
 אין שכחה לפני כסא כבודך ואין נסתר מנגד עיניך:
 אתה זוכר את כל המפעל. וגם כל היצור לא נכחד
 ממך: הכל גלוי וידוע לפניך יהוה אלהינו, צופה
 ומביט עד סוף כל הדורות. כי תביא חוק זכרון
 להפקד כל רוח ונפש. להזכר מעשים רבים והמון
 בריות לאין תכלית: מראשית כזאת הודעת,
 ומלפנים אותה גלית. זה היום תחלת מעשיך, זכרון
 ליום ראשון. כי חוק לישראל הוא משפט לאלהי
 יעקב:

אתה זוכר מעשה עולם:

Hashem remembers every single action that
 ever occurred in the world, and for Him it is as if
 all of these actions occurred all at the same
 time. Past, present, and future are all blended
 together into one. As human beings, things that
 happen in the past no longer exist. Our
 memories fade and it's as if they never
 happened. Not so for Hashem.

ופוקד כל יצורי קדם:

He judges all of mankind from all time every Rosh
 Hashanah.

He is dealing with everything all at the same
 time. But as much as He is running the entire
 world, from one end to the other, from the
 beginning of time until the end of time, all at the
 same time, He is also uniquely concerned with
 every single individual. We all know this
 intellectually, but we get so caught up in our lives
 that we sometimes forget. This bracha helps us
 to remember.

לפניך נגלו כל תעלומות:

All puzzles and enigmas are revealed to You.
 There are a lot of things about our own selves
 that we do not understand. Sometimes we feel
 something or do something and when we
 analyze it afterwards, we really do not know
 why we did that action. It may be based on an
 insecurity, a distant memory, a trauma, but it is
 in our subconscious. We also do not know about

all of the hidden potential inside us, that is
 something only Hashem can know.

כי אין שכחה לפני כסא כבודך

Because Hashem does not forget anything. He
 does not forget the generations that lived
 before us and He takes that all into account
 when He judges us. We are not judged as
 individual beings but rather in light of how we
 were impacted by history, by past events, by
 our parents, our ancestors, and everything that
 influenced our development.

As time passes, we forget our sin. We tend to
 think what we do not remember. It is as if it
 never happened and that Hashem probably also
 forgot. This comes to uproot this mistaken
 philosophy. Hashem never forgets and He does
 not remember in a very vague way. No, this
bracha reminds us that Hashem remembers
 every single detail, the good and the bad, there
 is *schar v'onesh*. There is accountability and this
 will hopefully help us to be more careful with
 our actions. This is not just on the negative side.
 Hashem also remembers every single detail of
 all of the good we have ever done. He
 remembers everything - even *mitzvot* that we
 have long forgotten, the seemingly unimportant
 mitzvot, or even just positive thoughts that we
 have had.

ואין נסתר מנגד עיניך:

Nothing is hidden from before Hashem's eyes.
 Rav Soloveitchik in *Noraot HaRav* writes that
 this refers to future generations. We are also
 judged based on the impact that our actions will
 have on future generations. We are a link in a
 chain and therefore cannot be judged just as an
 individual but on the before and after.

אתה זוכר את כל המפעל. וגם כל היצור לא נכחד ממך:

Hashem remembers both the big picture כל
 the whole of the creation, the entire
 cosmic process, as well as each unique
 creature, each person as an individual.

הכל גלוי וידוע לפניך יהוה אלהינו, צופה ומביט עד
 סוף כל הדורות

When Hashem judges, He can look at the entire picture, spanning all generations, and understanding the background of where we come from, and the impact, both good and bad, that we will have on future generations throughout history.

וְעַל הַמִּדִּינֹת בּוֹ יֵאמָר אֵיזוֹ לַחֲרָב, וְאֵיזוֹ לְשָׁלוֹם, אֵיזוֹ לְרָעָב, וְאֵיזוֹ לְשִׁבְעָה, וְגִבּוֹרֹת בּוֹ יִפְקְדוּ לְהַזְכִּירָם לְחַיִּים וְלַמָּוֹת

Here we mention the second level, the national level - every single nation is being judged today for their actions. And based on an analysis of how we have acted as a nation, we will be judged whether the nation will need to go to war or will have peace, whether we will have a famine, or have a plague, and what will be the destiny of the nation for the coming year.

We continue discussing the individual level:

מִי לֹא נִפְקְדָה כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. כִּי זָכַר כָּל הַיְצוֹר לְפָנָיו בָּא:

Who is not remembered on this day? The memory of each creation is brought before you.

מִעֲשֵׂה אִישׁ וּפְקֻדָּתוֹ וְעֲלִילוֹת מִצְעָדֵי גֵבֶר:

We are being judged not only for our *ma'asim*, our actions, but for our *pekuda*. What does this word mean? Rabbi Frand explains that the word *pekuda* means our life circumstances, and it is also connected to the word *tafkid* which means our life mission. Each person has a specific mission in life and they are given certain life conditions in order to be able to fulfill that *tafkid*. Therefore, we cannot be judged solely based on actions, but on what family we were born into, what school we went to, what talents and abilities we were given and based on that, we will be judged. This is very different than a regular court where people are judged just on the hard and dry facts. Here, Hashem looks beneath the surface at who we are as people and only then can He make a judgement.

Rabbi Frand goes on to say – after 120 years, we will not be judged why we were not like Moshe Rabbeinu but we *will* be held accountable based

on our potential – why did we not become the best we could be?

Rabbi Frand tells a fascinating story about the Netziv. The Netziv, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, lived in Lithuania less than two hundred years ago. He was Rosh Yeshiva of the Yeshiva of Volozhin and wrote a commentary on Torah and Neviim. When he finished writing his sefer the *Ha'emek Shayla*, he called together his friends for a special celebration. He told them the following story, "When I was a kid, I was a terrible student. I never paid attention, I was lazy and did not want to concentrate. One day, I came home from school and heard my parents talking. They decided that there was no point in keeping me in *cheder* any longer and that they would send me to be an apprentice to a shoemaker. I was so shocked by what I had overheard that I ran to my parents and begged them to give me a second chance. And from that day onward, I pushed myself to work really hard and to study." Then the Netziv continued, "But just imagine what would have happened had I not overheard my parents' conversation. I'd probably have ended up as a shoemaker. And I would have been a good man, I would have been honest in business, and I would have davened every day and made time for learning. But think of what would have happened when I would have come up to *shamayim* after 120 years. The *beit din shel maalah* would have said to me, "Naftali, show us what you've done with your life." And I'd proudly show them my beautiful shoes and tell them how honest I had been in business. And then they'd ask me, 'But Naftali, where are all the *sefarim* you were supposed to write? Where are your 10,000 students?' and I would have nothing to answer!"

And so these words *מעשה איש ופקודותיו* charge us to take a deep look into ourselves and to make sure that we are truly fulfilling our potential and accomplishing what we each need to accomplish.

We go on and say that a person is also judged based on *מִחֲשַׁבּוֹת אָדָם וְתַהֲבִילוֹתָיו*, not only for his actions but even for his thoughts. We know that one of the ten commandments is not to be jealous. The Ibn Ezra asks how can one be commanded how to feel? And his answer is that yes, indeed. We do need to find a way to control our thoughts. We are responsible for our inner feelings and can be punished or rewarded for them, even if they never translate into actions.

This section ends off with the words:

וְאַתָּה דוֹרֵשׁ מַעֲשֵׂה כָלֶם:

Hashem analyzes the deeds of all. Here we begin our second theme. Rav Soloveitchik (The Rav volume 2) used to say that Rosh Hashanah is a day in which Hashem not only judges the individual. but the community as a whole. The Jewish community as a whole needs to analyze the events of the year and do *teshuva* as a community for what the collective community has done wrong.

We then move on to the ten *pesukim* about *Zichronot*. These *pesukim* were not chosen randomly. There are hundreds, if not thousands of places where the root, לזכור, to remember, is used. The fact that Chazal chose these specific ten places is obviously significant.

In the interest of time, we will not go through all of them. But as you read them, you should keep in mind that each of these *pesukim* is here to teach us something different about *zichronot*. Almost all of them focus on the second part of the theme – the nation. We emphasize the national memory and the strong binding relationship and covenant we have with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. On this level, we are trying to remind Hashem of the *brit* He has with us as a nation so that He will forgive us and grant us a good year as a nation because of this *brit* and because of *zchut avot*.

We also need to show Hashem that we, as a nation, are deserving of this forgiveness. We are following in the footsteps of our forefathers and therefore should be included in this *brit*. The way that we do this is by showing Hashem all of

the merits of *Bnei Yisrael* in the past, as well as all of the merits of the Jewish people today. We need to prepare for this. We are about to enter into a courtroom and need to have our arguments prepared. What can we say to defend the Jewish people? It is our job to come forward and remind Hashem of all of the good memories, even though Hashem of course knows all of them. In this way, when Hashem sees how earnestly we believe in the *zchuyot* of the Jewish people, He will be able to judge us favorably.

When we look at Jewish history, we can look back at a long line of people who were *moser nefesh* for Hashem: Avraham at *Akeidat Yitzchak*, Yaakov who experienced so much suffering but never questioned Hashem's ways, the Crusades, the exiles from many different countries, the Inquisition, many cruel leaders, and the Holocaust. Even today, things are not simple. We are dealing with war, terrorist attacks, and anti-Semitism. We easily could have given up in any given generation and converted to whatever was the leading religion at the time, but we did not. We preferred to be *moser nefesh*, to suffer or to even give up our lives *al kiddush Hashem*. So we can say to Hashem look at us, look at our *zchuyot*, You need to judge us favorably as a nation and grant us a good year as a nation. Yes, there are problems and maybe there is a lot of assimilation and the leadership is not great, and there is a lot of corruption and immorality, but look at our background. The last time we heard *nevua* was thousands of years ago. We do not have a *Bet Hamidkash*; we do not have the presence of the *Shechina*; we do not have strong Jewish religious leadership, and yet we continue on and do the best we can. Look at how many *yeshivot* we have and how big the *teshuva* moment is. We are putting our best foot forward!

We go through the *pesukim* and we talk about Noach and how Hashem remembered him and saved him in the *teiva*, וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת נֹחַ, וְאֵת כָּל הַבְּהֵמָה, אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתֵּיבָה. Rashi says that the reason Hashem remembered him was because of the kindness that he showed to all of the animals on the *teiva*, feeding them 24 hours

a day. We need to think as we are saying this about all the times throughout Jewish history until today. We as a nation have looked out for each other and taken care of everyone's needs.

We continue and talk about how Hashem heard our *tefillot* and remembered us in *Mitzrayim* and redeemed us.

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת נַאֲקָתְכֶם, וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת בְּרִיתוֹ, אֶת יַעֲקֹב, וְאֶת אֶת בְּרִיתֵי יַצְחָק, וְאֶת אֶת בְּרִיתֵי אַבְרָהָם. Again we need to focus on all of the nation's *tefillot* throughout the generations and ask Hashem to give us a good judgement based on that.

Next, we bring in *zchot avot*, זְכַרְתִּי אֶת בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹב, וְאֶת אֶת בְּרִיתֵי יַצְחָק, וְאֶת אֶת בְּרִיתֵי אַבְרָהָם אֶזְכֹּר and we ask Hashem to judge us favorably in the merit of our forefathers.

And so on and so forth. In each *pasuk* we bring in a different aspect of *Zichronot* and ask Hashem to remember us and forgive.

We also ask Hashem to remember us as we were in our youth. We quote a *pasuk* from Sefer Yirmiyahu, כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה זְכַרְתִּי לְךָ חֶסֶד נְעוּרַיִךְ, אֶהְבֵּת כְּלוּלוֹתַיִךְ, לְכַתֹּב אַחֲרַי בַּמִּדְבָּר, בְּאַרְץ לֹא זְרוּעָה. This *pasuk* refers to the fact that Hashem remembers the *chessed* of our youth, when we left *Mitzrayim* and followed Him into the desert. This *pasuk* seems to be out of place in its context. It is found in the middle of the terrible *tochacha* - rebuke - when the decree was already sealed for the *churban* and Yirmiyahu was telling them of the things that will happen because of their actions. And yet right in the middle is this *pasuk* of comfort. But the message is that no matter what, no matter how much we mess up, Hashem will always love us and will always be able to find the positive.

Near the end, we get to another famous *pasuk* in Yirmiyahu:

Truly, Ephraim is a dear son to Me, A child that is dandled! Whenever I have turned against him, My thoughts would dwell on him still. That is why My heart yearns for him; I will receive him back in love —declares the L-RD.

נֹאמַר הַבֵּן יִקִּיר לִי אֶפְרַיִם, אִם יֵלֶד שְׁעִשׂוּעִים, כִּי מֵדֵי דַבְּרֵי בּו זְכוֹר אֶזְכְּרֶנּוּ עוֹד, עַל כֵּן הֵמוּ מֵעַי לוֹ, רַחֵם אֶרְחַמֶנּוּ נְאֻם ה'.

In this *pasuk*, Hashem relates to us as a precious and delightful young child, even today. Hashem relates to us in the present, as if we were still young. Rav Soloveitchik writes that while the previous *pasuk* is like the love of a father, whose love is aroused for his adult child when he remembers him as a baby. Here, Hashem displays the love of a mother who will always view her grown children as her babies, even when they are adults. Hashem takes the role of both parents, loving us despite all that we have been through and how far we might have sunk. He can look back at our youth, at our exuberance and excitement as a new nation, and focus on that. And we *daven* to Hashem to continue to look at us like a sweet little baby and remember that we are the ones who are giving Him *nachat* and continue to follow His *mitzvot* for thousands of years.

We conclude this section with

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ, זְכַרְנוּ בְּזִכְרוֹן טוֹב לְפָנֶיךָ, וּפְקֻדָּנוּ בְּפֻקְדֹת יְשׁוּעָה וְרַחֲמִים מִשְׁמֵי קֶדֶם, וּזְכַר לֵנו יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת הַבְּרִית וְאֶת הַחֶסֶד וְאֶת הַשְּׂבוּעָה אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ בְּהַר הַמְּרִיָּה. וְתִרְאֶה לְפָנֶיךָ עֲקֵדָה שְׁעָקֵד אַבְרָהָם אָבִינוּ אֶת יַצְחָק בְּנוֹ עַל גְּבִי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ...

We ask Hashem to please look at *Akeidat Yitzchak* and think about how much Avraham was willing to sacrifice for Hashem and realize that we are following in his footsteps. We may not be sacrificing our sons, but we are *moser nefesh* every day to serve Hashem properly. Even

when it is not convenient and does not fit in with our modern lifestyles and it is difficult, we are ready to sacrifice and therefore, we ask Hashem to have mercy on us and to forgive us for anything we have done wrong.

כי זֹכֵר כָּל הַנְּשָׁכָחוֹת אֶתְּהָ הוּא מְעוֹלָם, וְאִין שְׂכָחָה לִפְנֵי
כֶּסֶף כְּבוֹדָד, וְעִקְדָת יִצְחָק, לְזַרְעוֹ (שֶׁל יַעֲקֹב) הַיּוֹם
בְּרַחֲמִים תִּזְכֹּר. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה, זֹכֵר הַבְּרִית:

In the merit of our forefather Avraham and in our own merits, please remember your *brit* with us and grant us a good year both as individuals and a nation. The hope here is that after having gone through this internal introspection process of *Zichronot*, Hashem will look at us on a different level. This, coupled with all the arguments we gave on behalf of the nation, will seal our individual and collective fate in the book of life and success and all good things *b'ezrat Hashem*.