



TORONTO TORAH

ROSH HASHANA

1 Tishrei 5787

September 12, 2026



Candlelighting | 7:16 PM

Havdallah (Sunday Night) | 8:21 PM (50 minutes after שקיעה)

May Our Merits Increase!

RABBI YEHUDA MANN | דבר תורה

Rosh Beit Midrash



Every year, the simanim of Rosh Hashanah are a meaningful part of our family celebration. Our table has the full assortment—dates, squash, beets, leeks, carrots, pomegranate, and, of course, apples dipped in honey.

As we eat each siman and recite its accompanying Yehi Ratzon, one theme appears again and again: **“May our merits increase.”**

Over the pomegranate we say, *“Sheyirbu zechuyoteinu karimon”*—may our merits be as numerous as the seeds of a pomegranate. Over rubia, commonly identified as black-eyed peas, we similarly ask that our *zechuyot* increase. Many Ashkenazic communities even connect carrots with the same idea, based on their Yiddish name, *mehren*, which can also mean “to increase.”

But there is an obvious question: **Why are we davening for more merits?**

Hakol bidei Shamayim chutz miyirat Shamayim—everything is in the hands of Heaven except our fear of Heaven. Hashem gives us free choice. If I want more *zechuyot*, there seems to be a very simple solution: **do more mitzvos!**

So what exactly are we asking Hashem for?

The *Mishnah Berurah Dirshu* (583, n. 4) offers a beautiful explanation. We are asking Hashem to help us achieve the incredible result of *teshuvah mei’ahavah*—repentance motivated by love. Chazal teach that when a person returns to Hashem out of love, his intentional sins can actually be transformed into merits.

The decision to do *teshuvah* is ours. But the extraordinary Divine kindness that can transform yesterday’s failures into today’s *zechuyot* comes from Hashem.

And so we ask: *“Sheyirbu zechuyoteinu”*—Hashem, allow our merits to multiply!

But I once heard another explanation from Rav Shlomo Levenstein that speaks to me deeply.

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PARSHAT TRIVIA

- 1 What are the three main types of shofar blasts?
- 2 Why do we blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah?
- 3 What is the special name of Rosh Hashanah when it falls on Shabbat?
- 4 How many sounds do we hear from the shofar on Rosh Hashanah?
- 5 What special prayer is added to the Rosh Hashanah davening?

ANSWERS

- 1 Tekiah, Shevarim, and Teruah.
- 2 To wake us up spiritually and remind us to do *teshuvah*.
- 3 Shabbat Rosh Hashanah — and the shofar is not blown on Shabbat.
- 4 100 sounds.
- 5 Avinu Malkeinu.

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Rosh Hashanah and the Goal of Geulah

RABBI AMI YUNGER | מחשבה



One of the central themes of Rosh Hashanah is Malchut, the kingship of Hashem. Again and again throughout the tefillot we describe Hashem as King and ask for the day when His kingship will be recognized throughout the world. But this raises a basic question. Hashem is already King. What exactly are we asking for?

Perhaps the answer lies in understanding the ultimate purpose of Geulah. The Ramchal, in Da'at Tevunot, explains that the goal toward which history is moving is the revelation of Hashem's absolute unity and sovereignty. Hashem is always One and always rules the world, but that truth is often hidden. The world can appear fragmented, chaotic, and disconnected from its Creator. The purpose of Geulah is for that reality to become clear.

This is expressed directly by the Navi Zechariah:

וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ, בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִי ה' אֶחָד וְשֵׁמוֹ אֶחָד

"Hashem will be King over the entire earth; on that day Hashem will be One and His Name One." (Zechariah 14:9)

Of course, Hashem does not become One only at the time of redemption. Rather, the world finally recognizes what was true all along. Geulah transforms Hashem's kingship from a hidden reality into a revealed one.

This gives new meaning to the Malchuyot of Rosh Hashanah. When we say, "מְלוֹךְ עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ בְּכֹבֶדְךָ, Reign over the entire world in Your glory," we are not simply making a theological declaration. We are praying for Geulah. We are asking for a world in which Hashem's presence is no longer concealed and humanity recognizes its Creator.

Rav Kook explains that this is also bound up with the national mission of Am Yisrael. Our task is not merely to produce righteous individuals. Am Yisrael is meant to build an entire national life infused with the Divine ideal, a society whose religious, moral, social, and national life demonstrates what it means for Hashem's presence to shape every dimension of human existence.

That is why Geulah involves more than simply rescuing Jews from danger. The return of Am Yisrael to Eretz Yisrael, the rebuilding of Jewish national life, the return of the Shechinah, the Beit Hamikdash, and ultimately Mashiach are all parts of a much larger process: revealing Hashem within the world.

Rosh Hashanah therefore asks us to think beyond ourselves. Certainly, we examine our own lives and consider what must change. But the great aspiration of the day is larger: "וַיִּדַע כָּל פֶּעוּל כִּי אַתָּה פֹּעֵלָתוֹ," that every creation recognize its Creator.

Every Rosh Hashanah we crown Hashem as King. Geulah is the process through which the entire world eventually joins us.

Soul at Work: Deepening Our Tefillah

RABBI ORI IDELS | תפילה



Modeh Ani: A Transformative Mindset

One of the most foundational declarations in Jewish life is: "Modeh ani lefanecha, Melech chai ve'kayam, shehechezarta bi nishmati b'chemla, raba emunatecha" ("I give thanks before You, living and eternal King, Who has mercifully restored my soul within me; great is Your faithfulness"). We begin our morning with gratitude to the Ribono Shel Olam—Who lives for eternity, unlike mortals whose soul departs each night and is renewed each dawn. That Hashem graciously restores our neshama reflects His profound faith in us: He believes in our potential to rise, grow, and surpass who we were yesterday.

This recitation has become so universally embraced that many assume it to be an ancient Talmudic enactment. In truth, the first authority to document this formulation was the 16th-century sage of Tzfat, Rabbi Moshe ben Machir, in his classic work Seder HaYom. Its halachic authority was later firmly cemented when the Mishnah Berurah cited Rabbi Moshe ben Machir by name (Orach Chaim 1:8), codifying as normative practice that every person should recite Modeh Ani immediately upon waking.

Why inaugurate each day with this specific declaration, and how does it shape our path forward?

In Olat Re'iyah, his commentary on the Siddur, Rav Kook explains that "Modeh" stems directly from hoda'ah—the recognition of kindness and gratitude (rather than viduy, confession of wrongdoing). When one awakens, they are called to view the natural mechanism of rising not as a given, but as a pure gift. Once a person realizes that consciousness itself is an unearned chessed, everything else that unfolds throughout the day becomes an added blessing—a true bonus. Contemporary discourse often revolves around entitlements: "What am I owed?" The Torah perspective, however, begins with responsibility: "What is my obligation?"—as the Mesillat Yesharim famously opens: "What is man's duty in his world." Through this prism, one naturally perceives the abundant kindness woven into everyday reality; nothing remains taken for granted.

A Thought for the Week Ahead:

Take one day this week and pause for a brief moment just before reciting Modeh Ani. Ask yourself: What in my life is truly not to be taken for granted, and what do I genuinely wish to thank Hashem for today? A single conscious moment at dawn—a lifelong transformation in mindset.

Hatzlacha!

For thoughts, comments, and feedback: ori.idels2@gmail.com

May Our Merits Increase!

(continued from page 1)

A person can prepare a Torah class and choose to deliver it. That is within his control. But what happens next is not.

How many people will attend? Who will hear about the class? Which person will be inspired by one sentence? Who will repeat that idea to someone else? Perhaps one participant will make a change that affects his children and grandchildren. **We control the mitzvah. Hashem controls how far its impact can travel.**

When we ask “*Sheyirbu zechuyoteinu*,” perhaps we are asking Hashem: **Please don't allow my mitzvah to remain one isolated act. Let it multiply. Let it inspire another mitzvah, another person, another generation.**

And this idea extends far beyond teaching Torah. A person decides to learn in the Beit Midrash. He may think he simply learned for an hour. But perhaps someone else saw him learning and was inspired to open a sefer..

A person comes to shul. He may think he simply davened with a minyan. But perhaps his presence strengthened the minyan, strengthened the shul, and encouraged another person to come more regularly.

Someone begins learning with a *chavruta*. Perhaps that chavruta becomes inspired to start Daf Yomi. Perhaps that changes his home, his children, and ultimately generations to come. **We rarely know where a mitzvah ends.**

And that is both inspiring and sobering. Our actions create ripples. When we live lives of Torah, kindness, integrity and commitment, we influence the people around us—sometimes without even realizing it. And, *chas v'shalom*, the opposite can also be true. Our negative choices can influence others as well.

Perhaps, then, “*Sheyirbu zechuyoteinu*” is not merely a request for more mitzvos. It is a prayer for **bigger mitzvos**—mitzvos whose impact extends far beyond the moment in which they were performed.

As we begin a new year, may we merit to live lives filled with Torah and mitzvos. But may Hashem grant us something even greater: **May every good deed create another good deed. May our Torah inspire more Torah. May our kindness inspire more kindness. May our choices uplift our families, our communities, and generations we may never even meet.**

Sheyirbu zechuyoseinu—may our merits truly multiply, until all those individual ripples of goodness join together and bring the Geulah Sheleimah, speedily in our days.

Mutual Responsibility: From the Individual to Klal Yisrael

RABBI ORI EZRA | ארץ ישראל



As we enter Rosh Hashanah and stand before Hashem at the beginning of a new year, we are called to reflect not only on our own lives but also on our responsibility toward one another. This idea of mutual responsibility is deeply connected to our entry into Eretz Yisrael. It was then that Hashem established a covenant of mutual responsibility with us:

“You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your God... to enter into the covenant of Hashem your God and into His oath, which Hashem your God is making with you today.” (Devarim 29:9, 11)

This covenant concerns more “revealed” elements, such as our actions, rather than our thoughts.

“The hidden things belong to Hashem our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever, to carry out all the words of this Torah.” (Devarim 29:28)

Rashi explains that we are not collectively responsible for another person's hidden thoughts, which are known only to Hashem. But regarding what is revealed, we are responsible for one another. This began when Am Yisrael crossed the Jordan, accepted the oath at Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, and “became guarantors for one another.” (Rashi on Devarim 29:28)

With our entry into Eretz Yisrael, we rose to a new level: from individual responsibility to responsibility for Klal Yisrael. Every action becomes a matter of the collective. It is like a soldier in an army: his actions contribute to the entire army, and he is judged accordingly.

Today, in our generation of kibbutz galuyot (ingathering of the exiles), Am Yisrael has moved from being “one people scattered and dispersed among the nations” to becoming “one nation in the Land.” From communities struggling independently for their physical, spiritual, and cultural survival, we have returned to national sovereignty. We have our own state and our own army.

But mutual responsibility extends beyond security and physical survival. It also concerns the spiritual and moral condition of Am Yisrael. We cannot close our eyes to what is wrong in Israeli society and place the responsibility on others. We are all guarantors for one another. Even our confession is in the plural: “*Ashamnu, bagadnu, gazalnu*” - “We have sinned, we have betrayed, we have stolen.”

As we enter Rosh Hashanah, our teshuva must therefore be not only for ourselves, but for our people and for the entire world. As the Rambam teaches:

“A person should see himself and the entire world as equally balanced between merit and liability. If he commits one sin, he has tipped himself and the entire world toward liability; if he performs one mitzvah, he has tipped himself and the entire world toward merit.” (Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4)

How fortunate we are that Hashem chose us from among the nations to repair the world under His kingship. May our responsibility for one another bring us closer to a world in which all recognize: “For the kingdom is Yours, and You will reign forever in glory.”

What Should We Pray for When Rosh Hashanah Falls on Shabbos?

RABBI YEHUDA MANN | הלכה



Question: This year, Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos, and I find myself wondering whether I should include personal requests in my tefillot. On the one hand, it is the Yom HaDin, and I desperately want to daven for my personal needs. On the other hand, I understand that there are concerns with making personal requests on Rosh Hashanah—and certainly on Shabbos. What should I do?

Answer: The issue of personal requests on Shabbos is indeed complex. Chazal explain that one reason we do not recite the weekday Shemoneh Esrei on Shabbos is that its requests may cause distress. A person who has someone ill at home will reach Refa'einu and become pained. Shabbos, however, was given for **kedushah, oneg, and menuchah—not anguish.**

Indeed, the Rema (O.C. 584:2) rules that when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos, we do not recite Avinu Malkeinu.

Beyond Shabbos, there is an additional tension regarding personal requests on the Yamim Nora'im. The Zohar famously criticizes one who focuses selfishly on his own needs, comparing his requests to a dog barking, "Hav, hav—Give! Give!" The Vilna Gaon and other Gedolim similarly emphasized that the central avodah of Rosh Hashanah is not our personal wish list, but **Malchuyot—crowning Hashem as King.**

Nevertheless, practically, poskim permit personal requests on Rosh Hashanah—even when it falls on Shabbos. Halichot Shlomo (Tishrei 1:15) rules that one may add personal requests during the silent Shemoneh Esrei in Elokai Netzor.

How do we reconcile these ideas?

I found a beautiful approach in the writings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He asks: If Rosh Hashanah is about proclaiming, "Meloch al kol ha'olam kulo—Reign over the entire world," why do we simultaneously ask in Avinu Malkeinu for health, livelihood, and other physical needs?

The answer can transform the way we daven.

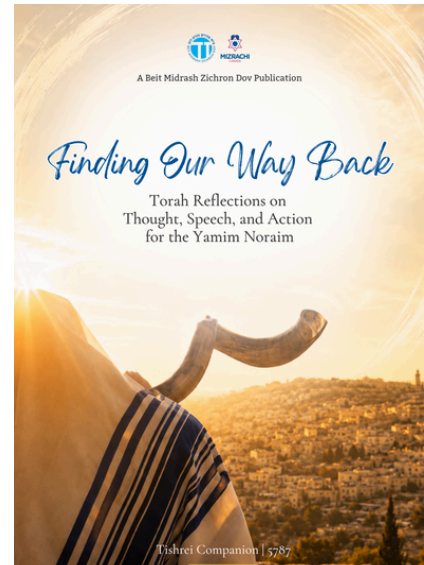
Yes, Rosh Hashanah is about making Hashem King. **But we need the tools to serve the King.**

We ask for parnassah so that we can give more tzedakah and serve Hashem with peace of mind. We ask for health so that we have strength to accomplish. We ask for talents, happiness, nachat from our families, and success in our communities—not merely so that life will be comfortable, but so that we can increase **Torah, bring kavod Shamayim into the world, and become better servants of Hashem.**

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