



Lesson 1, Series 2

Days of Awe

Verdicts & Daily Prayer

The Midrash relates: Adam was created on Rosh Hashanah and sinned on that same day, was judged and acquitted. G-d said to him: This is a sign for your children that just as you stood before Me on this day to be judged, and were acquitted, so too your children will stand before Me to be judged on this day, and will be acquitted.

But the question remains according to Rabbi Yehoshua, who believes that the world was created in the month of Nissan and Adam was acquitted in Nissan, so why is man judged on Rosh Hashana (month of Tishrei) rather than any other day?

Commentary, Ran 1320-1380, Rosh Hashana 16a: G-d wanted the Jews to be judged favorably, and therefore wanted to judge them at a time that was established to be one of atonement and forgiveness. From Rosh Hashana until Yom Kippur, G-d was in a mode of forgiving after the sin of the Golden Calf, which was completed on Yom Kippur. Thus it is a time of mercy.

We know that each year we are judged on the New Year and the verdict is sealed on the Day of Atonement. **[High Holiday Liturgy Mussaf Prayer:** Let us now relate the power of this day's holiness, for it is awesome and frightening. On it Your Kingship will be exalted...You will remember all that was forgotten...Angels will hasten, a trembling and terror will seize them-and they will say, "Behold it is the Day of Judgment, to muster the heavenly host for judgment! Like a shepherd pasturing his flock, making sheep pass under his staff, so shall You cause to pass, count, calculate, and consider the soul of all the living; and You shall apportion the destinies of all Your creatures and inscribe their verdict. On Rosh Hashanah will be inscribed and on Yom Kippur will be sealed-]

Rabbi Yitzchak (Talmud Tractate Rosh Hashanah 16a) said: Supplication is good for a man whether before the verdict is pronounced or after it is pronounced.

The purpose of our **daily** year round **prayers** is to attempt to alter any particular determination made on the days of awe. It is like an appeal on a decision that has already been handed down. The decision is there in full legal force. However, there are ways to overturn with a more favorable decision.

In Chassidic thought, this concept is developed by Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812) in Likutei Torah: The decree written and sealed is with regards to the amount of goodness that will be drawn upon his soul. This goodness, which is drawn from the infinite Ein Sof, remains in the supernal realm of Atzilut (highest of 4 spiritual worlds) too far up, on high, to have any physical effect.

In order to draw down actual results from this goodness into the physical world, such as our bodily necessities, the goodness must devolve and descend through the many levels and chambers of the supernal realms, until it manifests as physical goodness, namely healing for the sick, success, etc.

This is what the Sages meant when they said that "a person is judged every day." Based on his/her behavior that day, one is judged to see whether one deserves the goodness allocated on Rosh Hashanah to be drawn down, level after level, and converted into physically appreciable goodness. The alternative is that the goodness remain in its lofty spiritual storage and will be added to his/her enjoyment of the Garden of Eden.

In summation: On Rosh Hashana, G-d decides how much Chesed (goodness and kindness) a particular person be given. In order to make use of this “account”, the Chesed must go on quite a journey through the spiritual worlds, lower and lower until it reaches our physical universe and appears as the health and livelihood we require. Each day, can either be a deposit of deserving currency or withdrawal of undeserving Chesed, which would remain sitting in one’s account for a future time and era.

This concept is expounded upon by the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Rebbe Rashab, in Kuntres Umaayan, ch.20: The Rebbe Rashab expands upon the Alte Rebbe’s teaching and says that the shefa (flow of Divine sustenance) apportioned to us on Rosh Hashana is not only distant by virtue of existing in its spiritual form, but it is undetermined exactly what type of benefit it should be - livelihood or health or happiness, etc. A person prays every day in an effort to determine what format the supernal goodness, should assume.

In other words, through our prayers, we can influence exactly what physical form this chesed should take.

Now it is clear that our daily prayers are no longer dry words on a page. Rather, our prayers serve as an active process or mode of withdrawing currency from our spiritual account and transforming it into the type of physical benefit we would most appreciate at any particular time.

So how does one accrue merit? The Rambam mentions doing any and all the mitzvot but singles out Tzedakah-giving charity and being kind to others, as a particular means to secure a favorable judgment.

Why Charity? The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Likutei Sichot: When a person increases in charity, he/she demonstrates that s/he understands that one’s “meritorious judgment” is really only due to G-d’s charity (i.e. undeserved kindness). That is why s/he is giving so much charity-for s/he hopes that G-d will respond in kind and treat him/her with undeserved kindness, measure for measure.

Laugh a little...

A Jewish couple had lived their entire lives in a small cottage at the forest’s edge, without ever venturing out into the big city. When their fiftieth wedding anniversary approached, they decided to finally go to town celebrating their special day. They reserved a room in a luxurious hotel in the city center, but when they excitedly arrived at their lodgings, they were met with sore disappointment.

Golda ran back to the front desk, and angrily exclaimed, “We refuse to accept such a small room! There are no windows, no ventilation, and there aren’t even any beds!” The hotel staff tried to protest, “Madam, please-“. “Don’t Madam me!” Golda continued furiously. “Where is the money we paid for our room? How dare you charge such outrageous prices in the first place!” Finally, the receptionist managed to get a word in, as Golda took in a breath between rants. “Madam, that isn’t your room!” “That’s just the elevator you take, to get there!”

Dear Friend:

Welcome to Series 2 in our project “ Lesson in a Box”, brought to you by Aleph Learning Institute of Baltimore. This year’s project is titled, “Torah & Tea”, a Torah lesson along with our fine homemade biscotti. We offer JLI Torah Studies throughout the year and we share some of those thoughts with you, direct to your home or office. Torah study could be and should be part of your day, to remind us that Almighty G-d runs the world with the blueprint of the Torah.

Last year some of you received “Chai for Challah”, A Lesson in a Box, a different variety in our series. We hope you enjoy this year’s variety of “Torah & Tea”.

We invite you to share with us in our work, with a tax-deductible contribution, to help us educate our Baltimore Jewish community through inspiration and connection to our beautiful Jewish Heritage. Please visit us at

www.alephlearninginstitute.org and let us know if we can help with your continued discovery of your Jewish self.

With the upcoming holidays, with the start of new Jewish year 5777, we wish you much blessing in your life, in all areas, material and spiritual. Best wishes for a Ktiva Vchatima Tova, a sweet year for our people around the world and in Israel, the holy land.

Sincerely,



Rachel Kaplan, Director, Aleph Learning Institute