

Good Shabbos Everyone. On Rosh Hashana it is written, on Yom Kippur it is sealed how many will pass from the earth and how many will be created; who will live and who will die; who will die at his predestined time, and who before his time; who by water and who by fire, who by sword, who by beast, who by famine, who by thirst, who by storm, who by plague, who by strangulation, and who by stoning. Who will rest and who will wander, who will live in harmony, and who will be troubled, who will enjoy tranquility and who will suffer, who will be made poor and who will grow rich, who will be degraded and who will be exalted. But repentance, prayer and charity can remove the evil of the decree. (Unesaneh Tokef prayer)

On Rosh Hashana we will pass in front of Hashem just as the sheep pass before their shepherd. Hashem will examine all of our deeds from the past year. Prayer is one of the keys to teshuvah. Hashem hears the prayers of the broken heart.

One year, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov said to Rabbi Ze'ev Kitzes, one of his senior disciples: "You will blow the shofar for us this Rosh Hashanah. I want you to study all the kavanos (kabbalistic meditations) that pertain to the shofar, so that you should meditate upon them when you do the blowing."

Rabbi Ze'ev applied himself to the task with joy and trepidation: joy over the great privilege that had been accorded him and trepidation over the immensity of the responsibility. He studied the Kabbalistic writings that discuss the multifaceted significance of the shofar and what its sounds achieve on the various levels of reality and in the various chambers of the soul. He also prepared a sheet of paper on which he noted the main points of each kavanah, so that he could refer to them when he blew the shofar.

Finally, the great moment arrived. It was the morning of Rosh Hashanah, and Rabbi Ze'ev stood on the reading platform in the center of the Baal Shem Tov's synagogue amidst the Torah scrolls, surrounded by a sea of tallis-draped Jews. At his table in the southeast corner of the room stood his master, the Baal Shem Tov, his face aflame.

An awed silence filled the room in anticipation of the climax of the day -- the piercing blasts and sobs of the shofar. Rabbi Ze'ev reached into his pocket and his heart froze: the paper had disappeared! He distinctly remembered placing it there that morning, but now it was gone.

Furiously, he searched his memory for what he had learned, but his distress over the lost notes seemed to have incapacitated his brain: his mind was a total blank. Tears of frustration filled his eyes. He had disappointed his master, who had entrusted him with this most sacred task. Now he must blow the shofar like a simple horn, without any kavanos. With a despairing heart, Rabbi Ze'ev blew the litany of sounds required by law and, avoiding his master's eye, resumed his place. At the conclusion of the day's prayers, the Baal Shem Tov made his way to the corner where Rabbi Ze'ev sat sobbing under his tallis.

"Gut Yom Tov, Reb Ze'ev!" he called, "That was a most extraordinary shofar-blowing we heard today!" "But Rebbe ... I ..." "In the king's palace," said the Baal Shem Tov, "there are many gates and doors, leading to many halls and chambers. The palace-keepers have great rings holding many keys, each of which opens a different door. But there is one key that fits all the locks, a master key that opens all the doors. "The kavanos are keys, each unlocking another door in our souls, each accessing another chamber in the supernal worlds. But there is one key that unlocks all doors, that opens up for us the innermost chambers of the divine palace. That master key is a broken heart." (By Rabbi S.Y. Zevin)

By davening to Hashem with a broken heart, we can open up the gates of Heaven. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**