



Magen Avot

**Y@MA**

PRESENTS

# YAMIM NORAIM

A fun and fascinating booklet for everyone to enjoy  
over the Yamim Noraim

**2020 - 5781**



# WELCOME!



**Dear Magen Avot Community**

**Welcome to the Yamim Noraim  
Booklet 2020 - 5781!**

**I am excited to share with you Divrei Torah for Rosh Hashana & Yom Kippur, as well as some themes we can keep in mind and game or two.**

**The past few months have certainly been confusing and concerning for us all, but with 5 months of virtual programmes Y@MA has kept going strong! Looking forward to continuing the online programmes and hopefully starting face-to-face in the near future.**

**I would like to welcome the new cohort of Year 7s, and remind them and the rest of Y@MA that I am here to support, guide and encourage you through these unprecedented times.**

**I hope that you enjoy reading through this booklet, and I wish you and your families a Shana Tova and Gmar Chatima Tova.**

**Elliot Berke - Magen Avot Youth Director**

# A CALL FROM HASHEM

Rosh Hashanah is the anniversary of the creation of Adam, the first man. The Torah does not record what he did on his first day except for the account of how Hashem took him and placed him in Gan Eden to work it and guard it, with explicit instructions not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil.

The Torah relates that Adam and his wife Chavah were both naked, but they were not ashamed. When they violated Hashem's command and ate from the Tree of Knowledge, the eyes of both were opened, and they realized they were naked, so they sewed together fig leaves and they made aprons for themselves. Suddenly, they heard the voice of Hashem and they hid. Hashem called out to the man and said to him, "Ayekah?" – "Where are you?" He replied, "I heard Your voice in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid" (Bereishit 3:1-8).

This seemingly simple story is very enigmatic. While at times a person may allow himself to lie to his friend, no one would have the audacity to lie to Hashem! When Adam and Chavah realized they were naked, they made clothes. When Hashem addressed Adam, he is dressed in his clothes, yet he tells Hashem, "I hid because I was naked?!"

Man has been sent to this mundane and earthly world "to work it and guard it." It is incumbent upon him to study Torah and perform mitzvot and conduct his life in accordance with Torah instructions. For this he will ultimately merit a respected place in Gan Eden.

While some people are faithful to their mission, there are those who get side-tracked. The glitter of success blinds them into thinking that "I am a self-made man, an independent individual and have everything that is needed to assure myself of the very best." Little by little man forgets about his dependence on

Hashem and begins to make for himself "garments" — security blankets which he is sure will protect him. This is all good until one day he is awakened from his slumber by a "kol Hashem" — "the voice of Hashem." This could occur in any circumstance, for example injury, financial loss, falling out with friends or family, or any other negative sign that reminds us we have distanced from Hashem. All these are different manifestations of "kol Hashem" — the voice of Hashem calling man "Ayekah?" — "Where are you?" — wake up. At that time man realizes his nakedness without Hashem. Everything he thought he had, all that he built and amassed, amounts to nothing.

This is what transpired with Adam. Living in Gan Eden and having everything at his disposal, he "opened his eyes" and thought that he was secure and successful. Now he could do whatever he wanted, he thought, and not fear anything. When suddenly he heard a "call from Hashem" he came to the realisation that he was insignificant and "naked."

Hopefully no one should ever, G-d forbid, get "a call from Heaven" to awaken them. May the call of the shofar of Rosh Hashanah be sufficient to bring us out of our slumber. Let us resolve on this day, to direct our lives according to the will of Hashem.

(הרב יוסף דוב הלוי ז"ל סאלאווייטשיק, מבוסטון) Chabad.org



# IS G-D FAIR?

During Minchah on Yom Kippur, we read a portion of the Torah and conclude with a Haftarah which consists of the story of Yonah. The Book of Yonah is one of T'rei Asar — the Book of Twelve Prophets — whose prophecies spanned over three hundred and fifty years, from the middle of the first Beit Hamikdash era to the early years of the second Beit Hamikdash. Yonah was the son of the widow of Tzarfat, the young boy whom Eliyahu brought back to life. He was a complete tzaddik and the Jerusalem Talmud says that he was a "navi emet" — "a true prophet." The entire book of Yonah consists of only 4 chapters and 48 verses. Besides this there is very little recorded about him in the books of the Prophets.

Why was the story of Yonah selected as the Haftarah for Yom Kippur afternoon?

Yonah was ordered by Hashem to go to Nineveh and warn the people that if they did not repent, they would be punished. He refused this mission with good intention. Should the people of Nineveh, who were not Jewish, have heeded him, it would have an adverse result upon the Jewish people, who had defied the warnings and persuasions of the prophets. Yonah meant well, but our sages tell us that he was wrong to defend the honour of the child (Israel) rather than the honour of the Father (Hashem).

To accomplish his goal, he decided to flee Eretz Yisrael and run away to Tarshish, which some identify with the city of Tunis or Tartesus in ancient Spain beyond the Rock of Gibraltar. He chose a destination out of Eretz Yisrael because there Hashem does not reveal Himself to prophets. Hashem thwarted his endeavours and

made it necessary that he be cast him into the sea. There he was swallowed by a large fish, then spewed out on dry land. Ultimately, he went to Nineveh and warned them of their imminent destruction as a result of their bad behaviour.

Yom Kippur is the day in the year when all shuls are best attended. People who unfortunately don't come on Shabbat, Yom Tov, let alone weekdays, appear in shul on Yom Kippur. In fact, a story is told of a shul where on Yom Kippur before the conclusion of the services, an announcement would be made informing the people of the date and time for Kol Nidrei the following year.

Minchah is the last prayer of the day before Ne'ilah — the closing prayer. As we prepare to part with this very holy day, we read the story of Yonah which conveys the powerful message that there is no running away from Hashem. The Haftarah serves as a call that we should not run away from Hashem during the year, but rather to resolve to follow Hashem and Torah throughout the entire year, and to strive for mitzvot and tefillot to the best of our abilities.

Sources: Chabad.org, Michilta, Shemot,12:4, II Kings 14:25, Sanhedrin 11:5, Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer 33



# HEARING THE CALL

## RABBI KENIGSBERG

The Gemara (Rosh Hashana 16a) asks why we have two distinct sets of Shofar blasts on Rosh Hashana (one before Mussaf, and another during the chazzan's repetition) and the answer given is "כדי לעררב השטן" - In order to confuse "the satan". Tosfot explains that this refers to the accuser in the Heavenly court. Blowing the shofar twice causes him to become confused, and as his bewildered state renders him unable to provide arguments against us, we emerge righteous from the judgement of Rosh Hashana. When we blow the shofar the first time, it is clear that we are doing it to perform the mitzvah. But when the shofar blow is heard again, the "satan" fears that it is not our doing, but rather the great shofar blow of the time of Mashiach and he understands his time is up.

The obvious question is how and why this trick works every year? Surely it is well known that the double set of shofar blasts has been the custom for centuries? Couldn't the "satan" have just looked in the machzor?

Perhaps there is a much deeper message to be conveyed behind this seemingly bizarre tale.

The Torah describes Hashem's act of creation of man in the plural ("Let US make man"). The analogy given by the midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 8:5) is that an argument broke out amongst the Heavenly attributes. The attributes of truth and peace claimed that man should not be created, since he would be full of lies and create conflict. The attributes of kindness and mercy claimed otherwise – that man's creation would provide countless opportunities for good and kindness in the world. The midrash goes on to describe how, as they were arguing, Hashem proceeded to create man.

Of course the midrash is not meant to be taken literally, but the deep idea behind it is that man is comprised of and influenced by all these various attributes. On the one hand he strives to do good and to emulate the Creator, but along with that he is full of lowly desires and physical temptations which pull him down and threaten to sully his existence. The "satan" refers not to an independent being that lives amongst us, but rather to the lower self within each of us distracting us from the real purpose of existence.

The shofar that we blow on Rosh Hashana is meant to shake us out of complacency. It is a piercing blast that comes to awaken us, to cause us to sit up and take notice of the real reason we are here and not pay attention to the distractions that set us off course. The bewilderment that takes place when we hear that sound is an internal realization of what really matters most.

Perhaps when we blow the shofar the first time round, the voice inside is still inclined to say that we've been here before and nothing really changed. We had a momentary awakening but there was nothing more to it. Why should this year be any different? But as we blow the shofar a second time, the inner critic becomes silenced. Yes, we've been through this all before. But maybe, just maybe, this year will be different. At some point the great shofar will be blown. At some time in our lives we may have to force ourselves to change. Maybe that time is now.

May the shofar blast resonate within us all and usher in a meaningful new year. K'tiva veChatima Tova!



# ROSH HASHANAH SIMANIM

# TO FOCUS ON

## INTRODUCTION

On Rosh Hashanah, everything we do is imbued with extreme significance. We stand in judgment before the Heavenly Court while each of our actions, words, and thoughts are scrutinised. To assist our efforts in davening for Divine mercy, we follow the tradition of using simanim, literally signs or omens. These are the foods that we bring to the table at the beginning of the evening meal as promising indications of a favourable year to come. What are the origins of this unusual custom? How can we be meticulous in its performance? How do we harness its power to help us experience a year of prosperity?

## APPLE AND HONEY

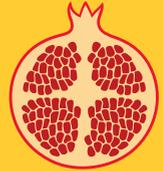


Probably the most recognisable and important siman is the apple dipped in honey. Although it is not mentioned in the Talmud, the Tur records it as an old Ashkenazic custom. While some simply attribute its origin to the lack of availability of the items mentioned in the Talmud, the major commentators attach deep meaning to this minhag. Maharil says that the apple is reminiscent of the sweet aroma that accompanied Yaakov Avinu when he appeared before Yitzchak to receive the brachos. Honey represents an additional significance in that the gematria of

honey (d'vash) is equivalent to 'Merciful Father'.

The Levush mentions that there is also an Ashkenazic custom to dip challah in honey. The Kaf HaChaim notes that this minhag has also been adopted among some Sefardim. This minhag is commonly followed during all of the meals on Rosh Hashanah, at the seudah hamafseket before Yom Kippur, and on Hoshana Rabbah; others maintain the custom through Simchat Torah.

## POMEGRANATES



Within the pasuk "Your temple is like a split pomegranate from within your kerchief," the Talmud notes that the Hebrew word for "your temples" can also mean "your empty ones." The verse is teaching us that even the most "empty" among Israel are full of mitzvot, like a pomegranate is full of seeds. Thus, eating the pomegranate symbolizes that although some of us may be lacking, nevertheless, we are all full of mitzvot.

The Talmud relates that the great Talmudic sage Rabbi Meir, who lived right after the destruction of the second Beit Hamikdash, was a student of Elisha ben Avuyah, a great sage who became a heretic. Even after Elisha turned away from the ways of Torah, and was thereafter referred to in the Talmud by the name Acher ("Other"), Rabbi Meir continued to learn Torah from him.

The sages of the Talmud ask how Rabbi Meir was able to do so. Is there not a rule that one must only learn from a teacher with a stellar reputation? The sages answer that Rabbi Meir, who went on to become one of the greatest sages, was unique. When he learned from Acher, "he ate the fruit and threw away the peel," as one would eat a pomegranate. In other words, Rabbi Meir was able to disregard and discard Acher's openly sinful behaviour like a peel, drawing out the valuable Torah insights that remained within.

This is the deeper reason for eating pomegranates on Rosh Hashanah. Through eating this symbolic fruit, we express our prayer to Hashem that when He judges us, He shouldn't look at our outer "peels," our external actions and appearances, which may at times have not been up to par. Instead, we pray that he only looks at our inner intentions and our true desire to do good and be connected with Him. Of course, we can and should also practice this in our own lives, always focusing on the best in others. May we merit a year of many blessings and mitzvahs—as many as the seeds of the pomegranate!

## FISH HEAD



Rosh Hashanah translates into "head of the year". Eating fish head on Rosh Hashanah symbolizes the desire to be "heads, not tails" in the new year – in other words, to be leaders, not followers. Devarim 28:13 states: "The Lord will make you the head, not the tail; you will always be at the top and never at the bottom - if only you obey and faithfully observe the commandments of the Lord your God that I enjoin upon you this day," The reference to the head indicates that our efforts to serve Hashem should not only be high in the physical world, but also to strive for a spiritually pure life away from aveirot. Fish also symbolise fertility and abundance due to the way they swim together in large schools and multiply quickly, in accordance with Hashem's commandment to "Be fruitful and multiply".

## CARROTS



Gezer, the Hebrew word for carrot, sounds similar to g'zar, the Hebrew word for decree. Eating them is meant to express our desire that Hashem will nullify any negative decrees against us.

# WORDSEARCH

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A	P	R	Y	A	L	S	E	L	I	C	H	A	R
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N	L	V	N	A	H	F	P	A	N	E	I	H	S
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**SHUL    ROSH HASHANAH    SHOFAR**  
**TASHLICH    FASTING    YOM KIPPUR**  
**APPLE    SELICHA    VIDDUI**  
**HONEY    LEATHER    DAVEN**  
**MACHZOR    TESHUVA    LEINING**

# GET IN CONTACT



07421 327 494



YOUTH@MAGENAVOT.COM

If you would like to be added to the Youth whatsapp group or mailing list please get in contact.

