

Rosh Hashanah / ראש השנה

Main Ideas

Our davening on Rosh Hashanah has the power to change or create Hashem's will.

Hashem wants us to turn to Him for our needs.

Student Worksheet
Pages 7-9 

Background

The haftorah for the first day of Rosh Hashanah describes the birth of Shmuel Hanavi to Elkanah and his wife Chana, who had been childless for many years.

During one of her annual trips to the Mishkan in Shiloh, Chana begged Hashem to bless her with a son, promising to dedicate him to Hashem's service. Chana conceived and gave birth to a son, whom she called Shmuel. Once the child was weaned, she brought him to Shiloh and entrusted him to the care of Eli HaKohen. Chana greatly thanked Hashem.

Chana davened this silent tefillah on Rosh Hashanah.

This story of Chana's tefillah is a classic example of davening, and many halachos are derived from it.

Halachos/Minhagim

Halachos derived from Chana's tefillah:

1. "היא מדברת על לבה"
"She spoke in her heart"
הלכה: One must concentrate his/her heart and thoughts by tefillah.
2. "רק שפתי נעות"
"Only her lips moved"
הלכה: One who davens must move his lips.
3. "וקולה לא ישמע"
"Her voice could not be heard"
הלכה: It is prohibited to raise one's voice in prayer.

Shmuel 1 1:13; Berachos 31a

Extend Your Knowledge

Two types of tefillah:

1. Asking for your needs on a daily basis
2. Davening in a time of specific need

Common Denominator:

There's a discussion amongst the Rishonim whether daily tefillah is a Torah obligation or a Rabbinic one. All agree that when a person feels a strong lack or need, the Torah obligates him or her to turn to Hashem and ask for help.

Chassidic Concepts

תפילה: The classic wording of a tefillah is “Yehi Ratzon – May it be His will.” A tefillah has the power to create a totally new G-dly will. Chana davened for a child. This was something that seemed impossible in her life, yet we see that Hashem answered her tefillah.

In order to daven properly, you must not just recite the words of davening, but you must also have kavanah (such as removinG-distracting thoughts from your heart, and feeling that you stand before Hashem's presence). Sincere tefillah takes effort.

This is different than most other mitzvos. When you say a berachah on food, you are not required to have kavanah, because you are simply drawinG-down a level of G-dliness from its spiritual source to our physical, material world.

Tip: Draw a diagram of the sefiros and show how ratzon is higher than chochmah. This means that although “logically” Hashem wants to run the world a certain way, His Will is higher than the natural order He set up for the world to exist the way that it does. If you can tune into Hashem's desire, then you can change what He wants, and cause Hashem to run the world according to His new desire.

ברכה: Milashon Hamshachah. This draws down an existing potential from the higher worlds to our world in a revealed way. A berachah can be effective only when the desired outcome already exists above.

Example: When Yaacov gave berachos to Menashe and Efraim, Yaacov placed his right hand on Efraim, who was younger, and his left hand on Menashe, who was older. Yosef asked Yaacov to switch his hands, but Yaacov replied that Efraim will be a ruler of nations. The Torah states that the bechor gets a double portion, but here Yaacov gave the greater berachah to the younger son instead of the older son.

Yaacov was drawn down the berachos that already existed in the spiritual realms. Yaacov did not change the berachah; he channeled it into this world.

Discuss

Davening without kavanah is still important. Kavanah from a later day can uplift the person's tefillos from previous days.

Davening reminds a person about Hashem's presence in every aspect of his life.

Kavanah Insight: Tackling Life's Tasks (Hayom Yom – 11 Adar I)

There is a well-known tradition concerning individuals who do not have the mental ability to concentrate on the kavanos, the mystical concepts to be meditated upon in the course of the prayers, either because they are not familiar with them, or because they cannot recall the specific concepts at the appropriate points in the course of the prayers: It is sufficient that they have in mind a comprehensive kavanah – that their prayers should be heard by G-d as if they were recited with all the kavanos that are set out in the Kabbalistic texts.

In the letter from which this passage is taken, the Rebbe Rayatz continues: "When a Jew starts to pray, and thinks in his heart, 'Master of the Universe, may my prayer be considered as if I had in mind all of the mystical concepts of the Kabbalah,' that is certainly enough, for G-d hears everyone's prayers."

Our Rebbe Explains

Our tefillos on Rosh Hashanah create a new will of Hashem to be our King.

A king is a king only because of his people.

Mashal:

School opens the next year only if the students enroll again. Everyone has to register.

The sound of the shofar is the cry of a Jew from his innermost soul. This evokes Hashem's will to be King over Creation and us.

Our tefillos cause Hashem to "accept His position" as King over the world.

On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem also judges us and decides what will happen in the coming year. This is an opportune time to appreciate the power of tefillah and to daven to Hashem for all your needs and desires, and of course for Moshiach.

Sources

Chasidic Perspectives, Rabbi Metzger, pages 14-20

Likkutei Sichos, vol. 29, pages 182-188

Tackling Life's Tasks – Hayom Yom, Yud-Daled Sivan

Information about Chana HaNeviah:

http://www.chabad.org/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/4758/jewish/Chana.htm

http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/564040/jewish/Rosh-Hashanah-Haftorahs-in-a-Nutshell.htm

On Rosh Hashanah we have the opportunity to daven to Hashem, and to completely change Hashem's will to be expressed in a way that is clearly good in our eyes.

Discuss

During this auspicious time, take the opportunity to look inside yourself and think about what you want to daven for. What are your true needs and desires? What do you want to change in your life in this coming year?

Sometimes we don't see our tefillos being clearly answered in the way we want.

Mashal:

In a relationship between a parent and child, sometimes the child asks for something, and the parents can agree or say no.

Reflect

What will be different about your davening this ראש השנה?

Enrichment – Story

The Alter Rebbe told his chassidim that on Rosh Hashanah we must feel joy in our service to Hashem.

A few years later, the Mittlerer Rebbe came to his father to wish him the customary Rosh Hashanah greetings, and found his father the Alter Rebbe with eyes red from crying.

The Mittlerer Rebbe asked, "Why the sadness?" and the Alter Rebbe responded, "What sadness? My soul is filled with joy. The tears are merely intended to mislead the prosecuting angels!"

חודש תשרי

in My **Life**

Month of Tishrei

ROSH HASHANAH IN MY LIFE

For each of the following statements, write whether you agree or disagree:

There is place in davening to ask for my personal needs.

Hashem already knows what I need; there's no reason for me to ask.

Hashem listens to my tefillos and answers them.

I don't see that Hashem is answering my requests.

My davening has special significance on Rosh Hashanah.

My tefillos don't make a difference. I'm distracted when I daven, and my davening isn't good enough.

Background

Describe the haftorah for the first day of ראש השנה:

What day did Chana daven this תפילה?

Halachos/Minhagim

תפילה derived from Chana's הלכות:

1. "היא מדברת על לבה": She spoke in her heart"

הלכה: _____

2. "רק שפתי' נעות": Only her lips moved"

הלכה: _____

3. "וקולה לא ישמע": Her voice could not be heard"

הלכה: _____

Extend Your Knowledge

2 types of תפילה:

1. _____

2. _____

Common Denominator:

Chassidic Concepts

תפילה

ברכה

What did Chana daven for?

Our Rebbe Explains

What happens on ראש השנה?

יהדות

in My Life