

When the Judge Turns His Face Toward Us

The Ten Days That Contain an Entire Year

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Four Questions

This class is based on a magnificent essay of Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt”l about the true power of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. We are going to follow his thought from beginning to end and try to see these ten days through the window that he opens for us.

There is a beautiful pasuk in Tehillim:

אשרי העם ידעי תרועה ה' באור פניך יהלכון “Fortunate is the nation that knows the teruah; Hashem, they walk in the light of Your countenance.” —Tehillim 89:16

We understand why the pasuk might praise a nation that blows the shofar. We could even

understand why it would praise a nation that hears the shofar. But that is not what the pasuk says. It praises the nation that knows the teruah.

Then the pasuk gives a result that appears entirely unrelated to sound:

ה' באור פניך יהלכון “Hashem, they walk in the light of Your face.”

What does hearing the shofar have to do with seeing the face of Hashem?

That is our first question.

Here is our second question. Rosh Hashanah is — יום הדין Yom HaDin, the Day of Judgment. Yom Kippur is the day upon which that judgment is sealed. Yet Chazal teach that these very days are the time when Hashem is especially close and teshuvah is accepted most readily.

The Gemara applies the words of Yeshayahu —

דרשו ה' בהמצאו קראוהו בהיותו קרוב “Seek Hashem when He is to be found; call Him when He is near.”

—specifically to the ten days from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur (Rosh Hashanah

18a). The Rambam consequently writes that although teshuvah and crying out to Hashem are always effective, during these ten days they are especially effective and are accepted immediately.

Why would Hashem arrange for the year’s most serious judgment to take place precisely when

He makes Himself most available to us?

Is mercy somehow interrupting the judgment? Does Hashem look away from the truth in order to be compassionate? Or could there be a kind of judgment that is itself an expression of love?

Here is our third question. We are taught that during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, every moment possesses the spiritual dimensions of an entire year.

How can that be? How can one prayer, one mitzvah, one act of kindness, or one honest moment of teshuvah contain an entire year?

Finally, the Yerushalmi makes an extraordinary statement. It says that the early chasidim would ordinarily refuse to accept gifts, but during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah they would accept them, because their portion had not yet been fixed.

Why would accepting something during these ten days not diminish what they would receive

elsewhere? To which year do these ten mysterious days belong?

The essay gives us one magnificent approach that answers all four questions. But to understand the answer, we must first accept something uncomfortable:

We do not see reality as it actually is.

Looking Through One Small Window

The Navi Yeshayahu declares:

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, and your ways are not My ways, says

Hashem.” —Yeshayahu 55:8

This pasuk is very familiar to us, but we do not really believe it.

Of course, we understand that there are many things we do not know. We readily admit that Hashem sees more than we see. But we still assume that whatever we do see is essentially true. We believe that our picture may be incomplete, but we do not suspect that the entire proportion

of the picture may be wrong.

Imagine a person standing inside a house and looking through a small window. Through that window he sees several houses, a few cars, some trees, and people walking. Everything he sees is real. None of it is imaginary.

But has he seen the landscape?

He has seen only the tiny portion of the landscape that happened to appear inside the frame of his window. He has no idea how much exists to the right, to the left, above him, below him, or behind him.

His problem is not that the objects he sees are false. His problem is that he mistakes a narrow fragment for the entire reality.

This is how we look at our lives, and especially how we look at the Yamim Nora'im.

Yom Kippur arrives. We do not eat or drink. The synagogue is full. There is a solemn atmosphere. We wear white. We recite long prayers. We become tired, hungry, and emotional. At the end,

the shofar is sounded, everyone wishes one another well, and we go home.

We feel that we have experienced Yom Kippur.

In reality, we have looked through one small window.

A person can stand inside an enormous spiritual event while perceiving only the physical details surrounding him. He notices the length of the davening, the discomfort of fasting, the temperature in the room, and the clock on the wall. He may not perceive what is being decided, what is being opened, what is being protected, or what is being created.

Only Torah allows us to see beyond the window.

A great Torah authority once spoke at an awakening gathering in Bnei Brak. During the preceding year, thirty-five young avreichim had passed away, rachmana litzlan.

The rav said that had the community cried out a little more during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, some — or perhaps all — of those tragedies might have been prevented.

Those are frightening words.

They are not permission for us to calculate why a tragedy occurred. They are certainly not permission to blame its victims or their families. We are not prophets, and we do not understand Hashem's calculations.

But the point is to shatter our small perception of what prayer is.

We believe that we are saying another paragraph of Avinu Malkeinu. We are being taught that

families, futures, and entire worlds may be suspended inside those words.

We look at the prayer book and see words. The Torah looks at those same words and sees an entire year.

How can one prayer contain so much?

To answer that, we must enter the hidden structure of these ten days.

When One Day Encompasses a Year

The Gemara in Eruvin discusses whether Rosh Chodesh must be mentioned separately in the Rosh Hashanah prayers. After all, Rosh Hashanah is also the first day of Tishrei. It is both Rosh Hashanah and Rosh Chodesh.

The Gemara concludes that we do not require a separate mention of Rosh Chodesh. When we say —“ יום הזיכרון הזה ” this Day of Remembrance,” that remembrance encompasses Rosh Chodesh as well.

The Vilna Gaon, in Aderes Eliyahu on the fourth day of Creation, explains the depth of this idea. On Rosh Hashanah, the month is absorbed into the year. The smaller unit of time becomes incorporated into the greater unit.

But the Gra says something still more startling. The ten days from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur are themselves called Rosh Hashanah because they correspond to the approximate difference between the lunar and solar years. Therefore:

המעשים הנאותים הנפעלים בימים אלו חשובים ככל השנה “The worthy deeds performed during these days are considered as weighty as those of the entire year.”

This is not simply poetic praise for ten important days. It means that these days are the spiritual head and concentrated seed of the year. Just as the month is contained within Rosh Hashanah, the coming year is contained within these ten days. An act performed now does not remain trapped inside one isolated hour. It enters the spiritual root from which the year unfolds.

There is a second teaching that makes this principle very concrete. The Arizal taught that the seven weekdays between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur correspond to all the weekdays of the year. The Sunday within that period can repair all the Sundays of the year; Monday can repair all the Mondays; Shabbos Shuvah can repair all the Shabbosos.

Each one of those days therefore gathers approximately fifty-two corresponding days into itself. In the Arizal’s full formulation, genuine teshuvah on that weekday can repair what a person damaged on all corresponding weekdays throughout his life.

The Gra shows us the structure: these days carry the dimensions of the entire year. The Arizal shows us the avodah: each particular weekday gives us access to every corresponding weekday that came before it.

If someone has misused his Sundays, then the Sunday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is not merely one more Sunday. It is the spiritual meeting place of all his Sundays.

If a person has allowed every Wednesday to disappear into routine, the Wednesday of this week allows him to gather all those Wednesdays and redirect them.

If our Shabbosos have been hurried, distracted, or treated as interruptions, Shabbos Shuvah is not merely another Shabbos. It contains the possibility of repairing the Shabbos dimension of the entire year.

Now the idea becomes sharper. The ten days encompass the year as a whole, while the seven intervening weekdays address the year day by day.

The entire year is present in these ten days, and every kind of day is represented within the seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

An act ordinarily possesses the spiritual dimensions of the time within which it is performed. If a person does something good during an ordinary hour, that act has the scope of that hour. But an act performed in the spiritual head of the year reaches into the entire organism that will emerge from that head.

When a person gives tzedakah during these days, it is not merely one isolated act of tzedakah.

When a person controls his anger during these days, it is not merely one quiet victory.

When a person opens a sefer and learns with genuine desire, it is not merely another thirty minutes of learning.

When a person phones someone whom he has hurt and asks forgiveness, it is not merely one repaired conversation.

When a person says one sincere, אבינו מלכנו it is not merely one prayer.

Every one of these acts touches the entire coming year because the entire year is present inside these days.

This explains the special additions that we place into the Amidah:

זכרנו לחיים מלך חפץ בחיים וכתבנו בספר החיים למענך אלקים חיים "Remember us for life, King Who desires life, and inscribe us in the Book of Life, for Your sake, living God."

We are not asking only for life during this present moment. The prayer of this moment reaches

across the year because the year has become gathered into this moment.

This is why no moment of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is small. We naturally imagine that the important parts are the dramatic moments: Unesaneh Tokef, the blowing of the shofar, Kol Nidrei, and Ne'ilah. But even the quiet, apparently ordinary moments of these days possess the proportions of a year.

One patient response can become patience for a year. One act of generosity can become generosity for a year. One moment in which a person turns away from something unworthy can become purity for a year. One passage of tefillah said with the heart can become prayer for a year.

During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, we are not simply living through ten unusually holy days. We are touching the entire coming year ten times over.

But why do these particular days possess such extraordinary reach?

Before the Blessing Has Been Measured

The Yerushalmi in Masseches Shekalim states that the early chasidim would ordinarily refuse to accept gifts. Yet during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah they would accept them because their “hour,” their portion, had not yet been fixed.

What does that mean?

Imagine a container filled with a fixed quantity of water. If I pour a large amount into one cup, less water remains for the other cups. I have not created more water. I have only redirected part of a limited supply.

Ordinarily, that is how the allocation of this world operates. A person’s material needs are fixed from Rosh Hashanah to Rosh Hashanah. If a particular benefit reaches him from one direction, it may reduce what was destined to reach him from another direction.

If his yearly allocation is fixed, accepting a gift may not actually increase what he ultimately possesses. It may simply change the channel through which his fixed portion arrives.

This is why the early chasidim generally refused gifts. They did not want to take from another person merely to receive something that Hashem could provide through a different channel.

Yet during the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, they accepted gifts.

Why?

Because these ten days stand before the year’s blessing has been fully enclosed within its ordinary boundaries. They are days in which a person can seize blessing before it has been measured into the year’s limited vessels.

This is not a financial trick. It is not a mystical method of increasing one’s bank account. It teaches us that these ten days belong to a spiritual realm that transcends ordinary limitation.

During the year, the blessing has already entered its containers. More in one place may mean less in another. During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, we are standing before the containers have been closed.

These are days in which a person can receive without taking from somewhere else, because he is standing before the blessing has been measured.

That explains the conduct of the early chasidim. But it leaves us with a deeper question: why are there precisely ten such days?

Ten Days from the World to Come

The Gra points to the relationship between the lunar year and the solar year. A full lunar year can contain 355 days, while the solar year contains approximately 365 days. The difference is approximately ten days.

The Jewish months follow the moon. The moon grows and diminishes. It becomes visible, reaches fullness, recedes, and disappears. It belongs to the world of change, measurement, and limitation.

The sun, by contrast, represents uninterrupted illumination. Its light does not go through the same visible phases. The sun therefore points toward the illumination of Olam Haba, the World to Come.

The ten days from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur correspond to the difference between the lunar and solar years. In a sense, they are days from another world inserted into this world.

This world operates according to limits, order, and din. Every object has boundaries. Every resource is measured. Every action has a consequence. Every person has a place. Every moment passes and cannot be recovered.

Olam Haba is a world of unbounded divine generosity. Once a person has merited entry into that closeness with Hashem, the flow of blessing is not confined by our present-world measurements.

This is the meaning of chesed: goodness that has no boundary.

The word chesed can sometimes appear in Tanach with an association of shame. The relationship is that when a person receives far more than he could ever have earned, he experiences a kind of embarrassment before the Giver. Why am I receiving so much? How can this generosity have no limit?

The Aseres Yemei Teshuvah are days of this unlimited chesed. They are days of the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, days when Hashem allows us to reach beyond the ordinary boundaries of what we have earned.

We usually picture them as ten days of anxiety during which the heavenly court is still deciding

our case. That is true, but it is not the entire landscape. These are also ten days in which an illumination from Olam Haba enters our measured world.

The verdict is being written, but the Judge is allowing us to stand in a place that transcends ordinary calculation.

We stand before Hashem with limited merits, but Hashem opens for us a world of unlimited mercy.

And now the great question returns with even greater force. If these are days of unlimited chesed, why does Hashem conduct the judgment precisely now?

The Greatest Chesed Is the Judgment Itself

Here is the startling answer:

The greatest chesed of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah is that the judgment itself takes place during these days.

Imagine a child who comes home from school carrying a terrible report card. His father reads it and is deeply upset. The grades are poor. The teacher's comments are disturbing. The report shows that the child has not been applying himself.

The father begins constructing a system of judgment. Certain privileges will be withdrawn. Plans will be cancelled. Consequences will be imposed. The father believes that the child must understand the seriousness of what has happened.

The facts are real. The report card has not been invented. The father is not wrong to be concerned.

But while the father is considering the punishment, the little boy begins playing. He finds one of his father's old hats, places it on his head, and begins imitating his father. The oversized hat slips down over his face. The child pushes it back and continues his performance.

Suddenly the father looks at his little boy and bursts out laughing.

The report card has not changed. The grades have not changed. The teacher's comments have not changed.

But the father's face has changed.

A moment earlier, the child stood before a system of consequences. Now the father sees his son. The relationship emerges from behind the report card.

Instead of anger, there is laughter. Instead of distance, there is closeness. The father may still need to deal with the problem, but he will no longer deal with it in the same way.

The facts did not change. The face changed — and when the face changed, the meaning of everything changed.

That is the special chesed of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah.

Hashem does not abandon justice. Rosh Hashanah remains Yom HaDin. Yom Kippur remains the day of the sealing of the judgment. But Hashem conducts that judgment during days of rachamim. He judges us while turning His face toward us.

The Judge allows us to see the Father.

This does not mean that Hashem ignores the report card. It means that we are not standing before an impersonal system. We are standing before — אבינו מלכנו — our Father, our King.

The King sees the truth. The Father sees His child. And in Hashem, those are not two competing visions. They are one.

This brings us back to the shofar.

The Shofar and the Attribute of Truth

The shofar is associated with — מידת האמת the attribute of truth.

At first, that seems difficult. If the shofar awakens mercy, why call it truth? We ordinarily imagine truth as sharp and unforgiving. Facts are facts. A debt is a debt. A failure is a failure. Judgment means that no amount of emotion can alter reality.

We tend to place truth on one side and mercy on the other.

That entire picture is mistaken.

The world in which we live is a world of concealment. It is governed by limitations, consequences, and din. Hashem created this system, and it is real. But the system is not the entirety of Hashem.

Behind the external structure of judgment stands Hashem Himself. Hashem's deepest emes is not coldness. Hashem's deepest truth is infinite chesed and rachamim.

When Moshe Rabbeinu was taught the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, one of those attributes was:

ורב חסד ואמת "Abundant in kindness and truth."

Truth is located within the revelation of mercy.

The Thirteen Attributes of Mercy are symbolically associated with the divine face. In the language of Kabbalah, they are connected with the, תיקוני דיקנא the attributes expressed through the features of the face.

Of course, Hashem has no physical face. But the Torah speaks to us in human language. A hidden face represents distance and concealment. A shining face represents presence, relationship, and favour.

When someone turns his face away, we feel rejected. When he turns toward us, looks into our

eyes, and smiles, the entire relationship becomes present.

That is — הארת פנים ha'aras panim.

And within that face is the attribute of. אמת

Mercy is not Hashem's departure from truth. Mercy is the deepest truth of Hashem.

Judgment is part of the truth. Responsibility is part of the truth. Consequences are part of the truth. But behind all of them is the greater truth: Hashem created us, Hashem desires our return, Hashem loves His children, and Hashem wants to give us life.

The shofar pierces through the external barriers. It passes through all the arguments, explanations, and carefully constructed defences. It reaches the place

before words, the place of the essential relationship between Hashem and the Jewish soul.

Now we understand the pasuk with which we began:

אשרי העם ידעי, תרועה ה' באור פניך. יהלכון

Fortunate is the nation that does not merely blow the shofar but knows what the shofar is doing.

The shofar reveals the face behind the judgment. It allows us to walk in the light of that face.

Not Merely a Better Verdict

What are we trying to accomplish during these ten days?

Naturally, we want a good judgment. We ask for life, health, peace, livelihood, nachas, and protection. We want to be written and sealed in the Book of Life.

But the ultimate purpose is even greater:

לזכות להארת פנים “To merit the shining of Hashem’s face.”

The purpose is not merely to persuade the Judge to give us a better verdict. It is to recover the relationship behind the verdict.

This requires something from us. If we want Hashem to turn His face toward us, our prayer cannot be entirely mechanical.

A machine may pronounce every word correctly. It may stand at the proper moment, bow at the proper moment, and finish at the proper moment. But a machine has no face to turn.

A person can complete all the prayers of the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah and still remain outside the relationship. His mouth has spoken, but his inner self has never entered the conversation.

Imagine a person standing before a judge who has just sentenced him to a long prison term. The judge explains the law, reviews the evidence, and announces the sentence. Before the prisoner is taken away, he is permitted to speak.

What will he do with those final moments?

If he merely repeats a prepared legal argument that has already failed, nothing will change. But perhaps he will stop arguing and begin speaking from the deepest place in his heart. Perhaps his words will reach the human being behind the judicial robes.

If he can reach the judge’s heart, perhaps he can change the entire situation.

During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, we stand before the Judge. But the Judge has turned His face toward us.

We therefore say:

אבינו מלכנו "Our Father, our King."

Not only Malkeinu, not only our King. And not only Avinu, not a loving Father without standards or expectations.

Avinu Malkeinu.

He is genuinely our King, and the judgment is genuine. He is genuinely our Father, and the love is genuine.

Our task is to say those two words with our entire heart.

The Name and Address

A young ben Torah once wrote to Rav Pincus. He had been struggling to grow in Torah and yiras Shamayim. He had tried repeatedly, but felt that he had reached an impasse. He did not know how to proceed.

Rav Pincus wrote back that the young man had apparently reached the stage at which he required assistance from outside himself. He therefore offered to provide the name and address of someone who could help him.

Then came the surprise:

קוראים לו השם יתברך "His name is Hashem."

Hashem was certainly powerful enough to help, because He created everything.

But then Rav Pincus added something unforgettable. He said that he knew "a secret": Hashem loved this young man personally and was waiting longingly for him to turn toward Him.

There was no difficulty finding the address. Hashem was everywhere. Even at the very moment when the young man was reading the letter, he could turn toward Hashem and speak.

People sometimes associate approaching Hashem only with formal prayer, mitzvos, or the pursuit of lofty spiritual levels. All of these are important, but they are not the essence of the relationship.

The essence is to recognize that Hashem is not merely "Something." Hashem is Someone.

Someone to Whom we can speak. Someone Who hears. Someone Who knows us personally. Someone Who is waiting for us to turn toward Him.

The young man wrote to Rav Pincus looking for a method. Rav Pincus gave him an address.

That is the avodah of these ten days.

Where Do I Feel at Home?

Imagine people who stand in the synagogue near the door. As soon as the congregation reaches Ashrei and U'va Letzion, they seem to be propelled outside. Throughout the davening, part of them is already waiting to leave.

They are compared to the way the human body rejects a foreign object. If a piece of metal becomes lodged inside a person, the body senses that it does not belong and works to expel it.

The comparison is intentionally uncomfortable.

It is not speaking about someone who must leave because of illness, weakness, family responsibilities, or another legitimate need. The question is not directed at the person's feet. It is directed at the person's heart.

Where do I feel that I belong?

When a person is inside his own home, he does not spend the entire time standing beside the

door and waiting for the moment when he can escape.

Do I experience Torah and tefillah as my home? Or do I experience them as a foreign environment that I tolerate until I am released?

This does not mean that everyone must spend the entire day in the Beis Medrash. It describes an inner relationship. Wherever I may be physically, is my heart connected to Hashem? Is Torah where my neshamah feels at home? Is tefillah a conversation I desire, or only an obligation I must complete?

The coming year can become a year in which prayer emerges from love, Torah is learned with desire, and mitzvos are not foreign objects imposed upon our lives.

The Beis Medrash can become home. Hashem can become Someone with Whom we live.

And that brings us to one final story.

The Song That Reached the Face

Rav Moshe Adler lived in Yerushalayim. Every Friday night after davening, he would take his children to visit an old-age home.

The elderly residents waited eagerly for his arrival. Rav Moshe would enter their rooms and sing:

ישמחו במלכותך שומרי שבת וקוראי ענג "Those who observe Shabbos and call it a delight shall rejoice in Your Kingship."

Those who were able would follow him into a large room. Some came in wheelchairs; others used walkers or canes. They would hold hands and dance for a short time, welcoming the holiness of Shabbos.

This continued for years.

Eventually, the Jerusalem municipality decided to purchase and demolish the nursing home. The city wanted to build the Tachana HaMerkazit, the Central Bus Station, on that location.

The residents were relocated. The quiet home disappeared, and in its place arose a large, noisy bus terminal.

Then the buses began running on Shabbos. Even buses that had officially ceased operating before Shabbos would arrive at the terminal after sunset, creating public chillul Shabbos in Yerushalayim.

Rav Moshe was deeply pained.

He was not known as a screamer or a fighter, but he decided to conduct his own personal protest. Each week he returned to the place where the nursing home had once stood. He stood outside the Central Bus Station and sang the song he had sung with the elderly residents:

ישמחו. במלכותך

He remembered walking from room to room. He remembered the tears in the residents' eyes, the smiles upon their faces, and the way their joy had been reflected in the faces of his own children.

Now, in that very place, the holiness of Shabbos was being publicly desecrated.

A delegation of rabbanim was eventually chosen to meet Ezer Weizman, who was then serving as Israel's minister of transportation and would later become president of the State of Israel.

One rabbi after another stood and presented his case. They described their pain. They protested the violation of Shabbos. They offered carefully reasoned arguments.

But their words fell upon deaf ears.

They were entitled to observe Shabbos, they were told, but they should do so privately within their own religious neighbourhoods. The public transportation system would continue.

Rav Moshe was the final person scheduled to speak. By then, the minister had lost his patience and was eager to move on to his next meeting.

Rav Moshe began softly.

"I remember your father," he told Ezer Weizman, "and I remember his parents, Reb Oizer and

Rachel."

He spoke about the family's roots in Pinsk. He recalled that many years earlier, Pinsk had been home to Rav Aharon HaGadol of Karlin, who composed the magnificent Shabbos song Kah Echsof.

Then, to the astonishment of everyone in the room, Rav Moshe began to sing.

At first, he sang alone.

Then some of the others joined him.

Soon the entire room was filled with the haunting melody of Kah Echsof.

Rav Moshe closed his eyes. For those moments, he was no longer standing before a minister of the Israeli government. He was thinking only about Shabbos, the precious gift that he had celebrated with the elderly men and women of Yerushalayim.

Again and again, he sang the words:

ויהיו רחמיו מתגללים על עם קדשך “May Your mercy overflow upon Your holy nation.”

Eventually, Rav Moshe opened his eyes.

He saw something that he had never imagined.

Ezer Weizman was singing with him.

Tears were streaming down the minister’s face.

When the song ended, Ezer Weizman picked up the telephone and called the head of the bus

company. He issued an unequivocal order: the buses were never again to operate on Shabbos.

The person on the other end began to object. The minister stopped him. There was nothing to discuss.

From that day forward, the buses stopped running on Shabbos.

The next week, Rav Moshe returned to the Central Bus Station. The buses were quiet. The protest had succeeded.

But Rav Moshe stood in the same place and continued his tradition of singing:

ישמחו. במלכותך

And if one listened very closely, one could almost hear the sweet elderly Jews of Yerushalayim singing along with him.

The Face Behind the Judgment

Every argument had failed.

Rav Moshe did not offer a stronger argument.

He sang.

The arguments reached Ezer Weizman’s ears. The song reached his face.

The public official who had been unmoved by every presentation suddenly remembered that he was not merely a minister standing opposite religious protesters. He was Ezer, the son and grandson of Jews whose roots reached back to Pinsk.

The song passed through the external position and reached the person within.

And when it reached the person, the face changed.

There were tears. There was compassion. There was connection.

And when the face changed, the judgment changed.

That is the secret of the shofar.

The shofar does not present a legal argument before the Judge. It travels beyond words. It penetrates the walls of the courtroom and reaches the relationship behind the judgment.

Now all four of our questions have become one answer.

How can one moment contain an entire year? Because during these ten days, the year is gathered into every moment.

Why could the early chasidim accept gifts? Because these days stand before the blessing has

been confined within ordinary measurement.

Why does judgment take place precisely during the days when Hashem is closest? Because the

greatest mercy is that Hashem judges us while turning His face toward us.

And what does the shofar have to do with Hashem's face?

Everything.

אשרי העם ידעי, תרועה ה' באור פניך. יהלכון

The people who truly understand the teruah discover the face behind the judgment.

During the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah, Hashem turns His face toward us.

He gives us ten days that contain an entire year. He allows us to stand before the blessing has been measured. He judges us not as strangers standing before an impersonal system, but as children standing before — אבינו מלכנו — our Father, our King.

And from behind the judgment, He waits for us to call.

Hashem has already turned His face toward us. The only remaining question is whether we will stop looking toward the door — and turn our face toward Him.

Principal Sources

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