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It is Chassidic tradition to 'live with the times', to find answers to our questions in the weekly parsha. The Shlah comments on Tractate Taanis that words are meant to buoy our spirits. Evil precedes but is a sign of the coming good. We see in everyday life that the shell covers the fruit; night precedes day. It is from within darkness that light emerges. If the Almighty had not created this 'shell' concealing the good within, our entire reality would have been different. Every thing good would have been tinged with bad. Every fruit would have been a mixture of sweetness and waste, wine mixed with sediment. Ultimately, the Holy One Blessed Be He wished us to have the wine that is m'shumar-protected-free of the sediment that caused the first sin (according to the opinion that the first fruit that Adam ate was the juice of a squeezed grape). That archetypal event changed the world, causing everything to become clouded and dark. This darkness is the foundation for the great light that will follow. This is the secret of the word "v'yavdel" And He separated' (Gen. 1:4) hinting to how G-d extracted the pure light from within the darkness. Consequently, this is the formula of our reality that we are able and must constantly extract good from within the negative. Secondly, we see that our continued exile, the trials we have been forced to face throughout the generations in fact cleanse us, saving us from much more difficult punishments. Difficulties push us to do t'shuvah—to return to proper Jewish living because we are forced to examine our own lives.

The Shlah continues that this is the reason that the first verse of our Torah portion, "Atem nitzavim"—"You are standing,"—follows the curses at the end of last week's Torah portion, and ultimately concludes later with "And this is the blessing" (33/1). The curses are really blessings, and albeit from a very deep level of concealment, actually for our good. In fact, as we wrote above, they are the source for personal change. Just as when we realize that our own negative deeds are our destruction, and we use this revelation as a springboard to turn to positive deeds, the negatives actually save us and become positive.

Rebbe Michil of Zlotshov gives more words of encouragement. On a verse later in our parsha it says, 'and you choose life in order that you and your children will live.' What is going on here? This is Judaism—we fulfill its commandments to receive a prize? Absolutely not, we do the commandments for G-d's sake, not for any benefit! R' Michil explains that when we do a mitzvah in the best way, for the sake of G-d because He commanded us, selflessly, with love, awe, and true intention, then we give that action a spiritual power, a life force that moves to higher and higher levels. Becoming something akin to a shining light, it spreads its effluence of blessings, mercy and life to all beings in the world. This is the inner meaning of the verse that we are commanded to choose life. This is the Jewish message the week before Rosh Hashanah. Redouble our efforts to do good. Do not let the darkness hold us back. When the Jewish people do the commandments in the best way, we bring a flow of blessings to the world and all its inhabitants. Let us all pray for the arrival of Moshiach. Shabbat Shalom, (By Rabbi Shaul Yosef Leiter, [www.ascent.org.il](http://www.ascent.org.il))

The month of Tishrei, the first two days of which are Rosh HaShanah, is not blessed by the congregants in shul on the Shabbat preceding it, unlike all other months of the year. Rabbi Shneur Zalman heard from the Maggid in the name of the Baal Shem Tov: Tishrei is blessed by G-d Himself, on the last Shabbat in the month of Elul. With the power of this blessing, Israel blesses the other months eleven times a year.

It is written [Deut. 29.9], Atem nitzavim hayom, "You stand this day." This day refers to Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgment. Yet you remain standing firmly upright (nitzavim), meaning - you will be vindicated in judgment.

This assurance of vindication in the upcoming Rosh Hashana judgment - contained in the opening words of the weekly portion, Nitzavim - is G-d's blessing of Tishrei embodied in the Torah-reading. (from Hayom Yom, [www.ascent.org.il](http://www.ascent.org.il))

## THE NAME – Rosh HaShannah

"Rosh HaShannah" means literally "head of the year." Every limb and organ of the body "takes orders" from (the brain in) the head. Similarly, every day of the year "takes orders" from Rosh HaShannah and is influenced by what occurs on it -- "As Rosh HaShannah goes, so goes the whole year." Thus, Rosh HaShannah is the ideal time to make good resolutions for the entire year and to fulfill them. ([www.ascent.org.il](http://www.ascent.org.il))

## TWO TERUAHS

The sound of the shofar is called a "teruah" (as in the scriptural statement "a day of teruah will be for you"). Teruah has two interpretations. The first is "pounding and shattering," as in "break them (tero'eim) with a rod of iron." In spiritual service this represents shattering and nullifying the ego and sense of self, i.e., repentance from the depths of the heart. The second is "affection and friendship," as in "and the friendship (veteruot) of the King is with him." The commandment to blow the shofar, whose theme is repentance, expresses G-d's great affection for us. For repentance provides a correction for even a person who consciously sinned, unheeding of the consequences. In this G-d shows His essential love for the Jewish people, like a father whose essential bond with an estranged son will lead him to search intensely for stratagems to recreate the former closeness between them. The wording of the commandment, "to hear the sound of the shofar," indicates that blowing alone is not sufficient. One must hear--i.e., hearken to--these two spiritual concepts. (From Sefer Ham'amarim Kuntreisim, vol. 1, p. 124 - as printed in "Days of Awe, Days of Joy". [www.ascent.org.il](http://www.ascent.org.il))

The concept of Rosh Hashanah as the day of G-d's "coronation" as king of the universe explains a most puzzling paradox in the nature of the day. On the one hand, Rosh Hashanah is when we stand before the Supreme King and tremulously accept the "yoke of His sovereignty." On the other hand, it is a festival (yom tov), celebrated amidst much feasting and rejoicing--a day on which we are enjoined to "Eat sumptuous foods and drink sweet beverages, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared, for the day is holy to our L-rd; do not be distressed, for the joy of the L-rd is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

But such is the nature of a coronation: it is an event that combines trepidation and joy, awe and celebration. For true kingship, as opposed to mere rulership, derives from the willful submission of a people to their sovereign. So the coronation of a king includes a display of reverence and awe on the part of the people, conveying their submission to the king; as well as the joy that affirms that their submission is willful and desirous. (From the Chassidic Masters, [chabadonline.com](http://chabadonline.com))

FROM THE HOLY TEACHINGS OF THE ALTER REBBE: "ISRAEL, ONE NATION ON THE EARTH." (1) THE NATION OF ISRAEL, EVEN IN THE EARTHLY WORLD, IS BOUND UP WITH THE ONE G-D. G-D TRANSFORMS THE SPIRITUAL INTO SOMETHING MATERIAL; ISRAEL TRANSFORMS THE MATERIAL INTO SOMETHING SPIRITUAL. (2)  
FOOTNOTES: 1. DIVREI HAYAMIM I, 17:21. 2. SEE TEVET 27; ADAR II 29. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, ELUL 27)

*As every year, we have all gathered in the last days of the year, days which serve as a preparation to greet the new year. It is therefore the appropriate time to undertake good resolutions for the coming year - to increase in Torah and mitzvos, beginning from these last days of the old year. Seeing this, G-d then increases in blessings for a good and sweet year. -The Rebbe*