ROSH HASHANA in three short lessons. # 3 . We and the Shofar

Rosh haShana is “Yom haDin”, the day of judgment. On this important day we stand before the Almighty knowing that we will be judged by Him. The Synagogue is a courtroom and the Shofar announces that the celestial Court is in session. HaShem is the Judge who examines the records of our behavior during the past year, and must decide whether we deserve or not a new opportunity.

What remains to be explained in a little more detail is what should we do while we listen to the Shofar, while we are judged by God?

The process of Teshuba formally lasts for 10 days from the beginning of Rosh haShana until the end of Yom Kippur. And in this process, each day and each event has a different role.

Once Rosh haShana is over we begin an intense period of repentance, reparation and forgiveness. We ask God for forgiveness and we ask our peers for forgiveness, aiming to repair as much as we can. The process concludes on Yom Kippur, “the Day of Forgiveness”

But in Rosh haShana requesting forgiveness would be premature. That day I must concentrate on Judging myself in front of God. How should i do that? **Trying to visualize myself, not as I normally do, but as God sees me.**

The voice of the Shofar is a wake up call for my consciousness and my memory. When I listen to the Shofar I must look at the mirror and admit my mistakes in my heart (□□□□□□ □□□□□). This first step, essential for the whole process of Teshuba is called *hakarat hahet*, “admission of my errors”. At that moment I must take charge of my mishaps without evading responsibility. This self-diagnosis is too serious to be taken lightly: it is a prerequisite for what will come after Rosh haShana: confession, repentance, apology, etc.

I will illustrate with an example what we should be doing when we listen to the Shofar.

One of the most important values □□in Jewish life is *hesed*,

generosity. Let’s take this value as an example. First I have to recall what I did well and what I did wrong this year in this specific area: Have I dedicated enough of my assets, my time and my effort to help others? Was I present when others needed me? How many people asked me for help and I ignored them? And especially, how many people who needed help and did NOT ask for help (probably out of shame) I have ignored? When I found out that someone was without a job, did I do everything possible to help? When I knew that someone had no place to be , did I open my house for them?
And to get deeper in my introspection I must include God’s perspective into the equation. Because when I feel that I am displaying my failures in front of HaShem my self-inquiry becomes more serious. For example: Given that HaShem was so generous with me, and He gave me means, health, talents, isn’t He expecting from me to share with others what He gave to me?
The main challenge of Rosh haShana is to judge myself as much as possible in the way that God is judging me. Seeing myself *from the balcony*, as He sees me. The more real my perception of God’s perception of me is, the less likely that I will deceive myself clinging to my self-exculpatory narrative, and the more effective my Teshuba will be. And vice versa.