



Commit to Hashem, the Rosh Hashanah Perspective 2023

The Rosh Hashanah Perspective is sponsored by the Pollak family in honor of the birth of their daughter, Emunah! May they continue to raise her in ways of G-d, His Torah and Mitzvahs!

The Rosh Hashanah Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshannaence. And in loving memory of Reuven Ben Yaakov, Leah Mintche Bas Yaakov Yosef, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia.

We are about to celebrate Rosh Hashanah and begin a new year on the day G-d created the first human beings, Adam and Chava. It is a time when G-d, in his Divine wisdom, sits on His holy throne as the fate of every being is decided. The sounds of the Shofar will blast as we crown G-d as our King, putting our faith and trust in His majesty and supreme sovereignty.

Rosh Hashanah is a time of intense spiritual introspection; we say many moving and stirring prayers as we ask for a year filled with health, happiness, and success. We read the powerful stories of Avraham and Sarah being blessed with a child at an old age and being tested by G-d to sacrifice his most beloved son. These stories are a profound example of faith, commitment and dedication to our Father in heaven, the Master of the universe.

The first day of Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbos, so we will only hear the sounds of the Shofar on Sunday, the second day of Rosh Hashanah. The Torah reading for the second day is Akeida's Yitzchak, the binding of Yitzchak, one of the most meaningful stories of all of Judaism. We read this on Rosh Hashanah to evoke G-d's immense love and passion for the Jewish people.

Interestingly, the Torah does not write all the details of this profound story; it skips the second day of Avraham's three-day journey to complete this task. The Midrash fills in what happened on the second day of their journey to the mountain.

According to the Midrash, the satan appeared to Avraham as an old and wise man and tried to convince him not to follow G-d's command. He told Avraham, didn't G-d promise you that Yitzchak will continue your legacy? How can you sacrifice him on the altar? Avraham obviously refused to listen and severely rebuked the satan for trying to stop him from fulfilling G-d's command.

Undeterred, the satan appeared to Yitzchak as a handsome young man and asked if he knew his Father's intentions for the sacrifice. Yitzchak paid no attention as his Father reprimanded and scolded the satan for interfering as they went to carry out their G-dly mission.

The Satan persisted, and suddenly, they found themselves in a raging river fighting for their lives. Avraham turned to Yitzchak and said this has to be the Satan testing us again, i have been here before and saw no river or water. He tells the Satan that no matter what he does, he will not stop him from fulfilling G-d's command.

The Satan realizes that no matter what he does, he will not prevent Avraham from following G-d's directives. The mighty river immediately dried up, and Har HaMoriah emerged in the distance as the third day began.

We know the rest of the story, Yitzchak was bound to the altar as Avraham prepared to sacrifice him as G-d directed. But an angel called out and told Avraham that this was all a test and he was not to offer his son as an offering. Instead, he was to sacrifice a ram caught by his horns and hidden in the bushes from the days of creation. Avraham untied his son from the altar and brought the ram as a burnt offering.

But a question comes to mind: How did Avraham know that the angel telling him not to offer his son as a sacrifice was not the Satan? The Midrash details the obstacles the Satan created; why did Avraham listen to the angel and not mistake him for Satan trying to stop him from following G-d's command?!

One of the answers is that when the angel called out to Avraham and told him to offer a ram instead, he saw the ram struggling to break free. He saw the ram fighting the bush to release its horns and set it free. The ram wasn't presented on a platter for Avraham; it was not easy or effortless for him to sacrifice it in Yitzchak's stead. Hence, he knew this was an angel and followed his directives to not sacrifice his son.

The Alter Rebbe, the founder of Chabad Chassidus, details in the Tanya the tremendous Avodah - work necessary to develop and maintain a connection with our Father in heaven. It is no easy feat; it requires commitment and dedication and demands the sacrifice of our physical desires for a spiritual relationship with our Creator.

The Talmud in Eruvin (53b) recounts the story of the great Tannah, Rav Yeshua Ben Chananiah and the young child. Once while traveling, Rav Yeshua Ben Chananiah asked a young child for the straightest path to the nearest city. The young child replied, "This way is short and long, and this way is long and short way."

Rav Yeshua Ben Chananiah took the 'short and long' way and soon reached the city but found it blocked by gardens and orchards. So he backtracked, found the boy, and said: "*My son, did you not tell me that this is the short way?*" The child responded: "*Did I not tell you that it is also long?*"

The Alter Rebbe writes that there is a "**short but long way**" in our everyday life" and a "**long but short way.**" The "**short but long way**" appears quick and straightforward. It promises immediate results and might seem like the easy path. It's like a sprint, where you rush to your destination, not paying much attention to the details along the way.

Conversely, the "**long but short way.**" A totally different approach that acknowledges the challenges and complexities we face every day. But does not shy away from confronting and addressing the obstacles head-on, face-to-face. It requires humility and honesty as we learn about ourselves and gain experience as we persevere to the finish line.

The Alter Rebbe explains that a real connection to our Father in heaven is only created and maintained by the "long but short way." Our spiritual life demands commitment and dedication, a constant stream of work and effort with patience and space for G-d's plan.

There are no shortcuts, no easy way other than embracing G-d, His Torah and choosing life as Moshe Rabbeinu instructed in last week's Torah portions. A genuine relationship with G-d requires humility, sincerity and trust as we weave through the complexities G-d places in our lives.

Accordingly, when Avraham saw the ram struggling, fighting the bush to release its horns, he knew this no Satan. It was too hard, too much work and effort to be masking the Satan trying to stop him from reaching his potential. So Avraham accepted the challenge and created the potential for us to overcome the difficulties and issues we face until the ultimate redemption.

As we listen to the cries of the Shofar and accept G-d as our King once again, recognize that G-d requires commitment and dedication. But in His great kindness and mercy, He gives us the strength, energy and ability to overcome any obstacle. To persist, prevail against overwhelming odds, and see His plan to the goalline, to the coming of Moshiach!

**"Imagine you could open your eyes to see only the good in every person,
the positive in every circumstance,
and the opportunity in every challenge."**

- The Lubavitcher Rebbe

May we all be blessed with a year of purpose and meaning.

A year of strength and health. A year of true happiness and prosperity!

Have an inspiring Rosh Hashanah!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini