

## **Rabbi Elazar Mordechai Kenig on "The Rebbe's Rosh Hashanah"**

Later Remarks

It was not possible for us to finish translating the second part of Rav Kenig's talk in time for it to be posted prior to Rosh Hashanah. We apologize for this delay. Nevertheless, we hope that, with the help of Hashem, we will be able to complete the work as soon as possible after we return from Uman.

The good news (or better news, at any rate) is that we have completed the translation of several related teachings about Rosh Hashanah gleaned from other conversations between the Rav (who we will also call "Reb Elazar") and a few of his *talmidim*, who asked him to clarify a few points he had made previously. The following is the gist of the Reb Elazar's remarks. The first teaching is an almost literal translation. Due to time limitations, the rest are synopses.

Best wishes for a *kesivah vi-chasimah tovah*

Dovid Zeitlin / Dovid Sears

### **Rosh Hashanah and Purifying the Mind**

[In elaborating on this issue, Reb Elazar connected two lessons: *Likkutei Moharan* I, 61, section seven, and *Likkutei Moharan* II, 94. First we will present these teachings, followed by Reb Elazar's remarks.]

This is why people travel for Rosh Hashanah to the *tzaddikim*. Rosh Hashanah is the day of judgment for the entire year. Each person comes with his holiness and his *tzimtzumim* (constrictions) to the *tzaddik* of the generation. He is the paradigm of the Holy of Holies, the paradigm of the Foundation Stone. This reflects the verse, "For unto G-d are the pillars of the earth; He has founded the world upon them" (I Samuel 2:8). These are the *tzaddikim*, upon whom the world was founded (*Yoma* 38b). Through this [i.e. by traveling to the *tzaddikim*], all harsh judgments are mitigated – through the aspect of the Foundation Stone, mentioned above [i.e. through the Supernal Intellect; see the original discourse at length].

(*Likkutei Moharan* I, 61:7)

As for the reason why people travel to the *tzaddikim* for Rosh Hashanah, this is because the main mitigation of harsh judgments is accomplished only by the sanctification and purification of one's thoughts, for this is their source. "Everything is rectified in thought" (*Zohar* II, 254b).

However, it is only possible to attain a pure mind through *hiskashrus* (spiritually binding oneself) to the *tzaddikim*. Citing the verse "Then Moshe took the bones of Yosef" (Exodus 13:19), the *Zohar* explains that Moshe is the aspect of the mind, while Yosef is the aspect of *tzaddik*. That is, there can be no perfection of the mind except through *hiskashrus* to the *tzaddikim*.

Rosh Hashanah is the source of judgments (*dinim*) for the entire year. A person must purify his thoughts in order to mitigate [these judgments]. This is why people travel to the *tzaddikim*: in order to attain purity of thought.

(*Likkutei Moharan* II, 94)

The mitigating of all harsh judgments comes through *chokhmah* (wisdom) or *sekhel* (intellect / mind / consciousness). Thus, implicitly the 'avodah of Rosh Hashanah is that everyone should "come with his mind" (see *Likkutei Moharan* II, 94) – that is, one must guard the mind, and mitigate harsh judgments by purifying and sanctifying one's thoughts. A person should have holy thoughts, and be careful not to dwell upon unholy thoughts (see *Sichos ha-Ran* 21). The Rebbe says that one should think "good thoughts," in general and in particular: that Hashem will be good to *Klal Yisrael*, and that Hashem will be good to us. *Meh darf zeh'n Rosh Hashanah tzu trachten gutt – gutteh machshovos – be-klalliyus u-bi-fratiyus*. For purely spiritual reasons, we should have holy thoughts on Rosh Hashanah, and guard ourselves against dwelling upon evil thoughts. However, even regarding material concerns, we should think good thoughts: that Hashem wants to show us kindness in these areas of our lives. This is what the Rebbe means by everyone "coming with his mind."

In *Likkutei Moharan* I, 61, section six, the Rebbe quotes the *Zohar* to the effect that "everything is rectified in thought." He explains that the *sekhel* is the source of all judgments, and there, all judgments are "sweetened," because "*din* (judgment) is only 'sweetened' in its source" (*Eitz Chaim, Heikhal ha-Ketarim* 13:11). Every *din* reflects a certain *tzimtzum* (constriction); every *din* has a corresponding *sekhel* that sweetens this *tzimtzum*. [Reb Elazar sighs.] The *sekhel* . . . this is the main thing. This is the fundamental task: to bind one's mind to the mind of the *tzaddik*.

The Rebbe discusses this in *Likkutei Moharan* I, 211, citing the verse, "And Moshe took with him the bones of Yosef," a teaching that also has a connection to *Likkutei Moharan* I, 61. The "perfection of *da'as*" is attained when one comes to the *tzaddik ha-emes*, particularly on Rosh Hashanah, which is the day of judgment. One comes with holy thoughts, good thoughts, spiritually and materially.

[The person who had asked for clarification mentioned to Reb Elazar that that on another occasion, he had said that one must also come to the *tzaddik* with "*yishuv ha-da'as*." Reb Elazar commented: "Not to be *mevulbal*, unfocussed and confused." Then he added: "*Vos men tutt, tutt men* . . . We do what we can do. But one doesn't need to become obsessed with this..."]

Rosh Hashanah is the time of *dinim*. And the sweetening of the *dinim* is accomplished by coming to the *tzaddik*, the "head of the Children of Israel," on Rosh Hashanah, in order to purify one's mind. Because "everything is rectified in thought." Thought is the highest of the three garments of the soul: thought, speech, and action. Therefore, the faculty of thought needs the greatest *shemirah* / protection. As the RaMBaM states, sometimes a person doesn't realize that he has damaged his mind by allowing his thoughts to stray. He may think, "After all, what did I do?" However, one must know that thought is extremely potent.

### **Rosh Hashanah and the Combination of Souls**

[Reb Elazar was asked to repeat an insight he had shared a few years previously about the combinations of letters / souls, etc., which the Rebbe discusses in *Likkutei Moharan* II, 8.]

We spoke about the interconnectedness of those who come to the Rebbe on Rosh Hashanah, how everyone is bound to everyone else in multiple ways. We discussed the permutations of letters and souls. These permutations and combinations represent an awesome and profound unification, beyond order and hierarchy. For example, when these permutations occur in the form of letters, the *tav* [which is the last of the twenty-two Hebrew letters, symbolizing the lowest level] may precede the *alef* [which is the first letter, symbolizing the highest level], and may even infuse the rest of the letters of the alphabet with vitality. Likewise, at the level of souls, the smallest may energize the loftiest souls, in keeping with the verse, "And they receive from one another..." (*Siddur, Targum Yonasan* on Isaiah 6:3). True, there is a hierarchy of souls, as we see from *Likkutei Moharan* I, 13 ("souls great and small"), and various other lessons. However, these new configurations become possible due to the intense love and unification of the souls that come to the *tzaddik* — to the point that the distinction between the *alef* and the *tav*, "greater souls" and "lesser souls," is entirely forgotten and disappears.

### **Leaving Eretz Yisrael to Go to the Tzaddik**

Reb Avraham Sternhartz writes in his *Amaros Tehoros*:

"According to what we may understand from *Likkutei Moharan* II, 67, the holiness of the *Beis ha-Mikdash* depends upon the *tzaddik*, whose light shines into it. Therefore, we must mourn the passing of the *tzaddik* all the more sorrowfully. Concerning this, my grandfather, the Rav of Tcherin, of blessed memory, states in his *Zimras ha-Aretz* that in these times, after the destruction of the Holy Temple, and especially after the passing of the *tzaddikim*, the entire holiness of *Eretz Yisrael* and *Yerushalayim* is damaged and concealed. Although they are aspects of the *tzaddik* — even the Western Wall, which is an aspect of the Foundation Stone [being a remnant of the *Beis ha-Mikdash*] — nevertheless, as long as they remain in a state of destruction, their entire holiness is damaged and hidden. This holiness devolves from the paradigm of the 'beginning of the year,' as the verse states: 'The watchful eyes of Hashem are there from the beginning of the year until the end of the year...' (Deuteronomy 11:12). — 'eyes' specifically; for [the 'eyes'] are the *tzaddikim*." [Translator: The Rebbe, ad

loc., relates the *tzaddikim* to the "eyes of the congregation" (Numbers 15:24). He also relates the eyes to the *Beis ha-Mikdash*, which is called "the desire of your eyes" (Ezekiel 24:16). The verse from Deuteronomy connects Rosh Hashanah and *Eretz Yisrael*. Thus, the holiness of *Eretz Yisrael* and Yerushalayim is contingent on the Rosh Hashanah of the *tzaddik*.]

That we are still in a state of exile is readily apparent from the words of the *Shemoneh Esreh* ("Ve-Yerushalaim 'Irkha") and *Birkhas ha-Mazon* ("U-vene Yerushalayim"), as well as the *nusach* of "Nachem," which we recite on Tisha be-Av. The holiness of *Eretz Yisrael* is still hidden and concealed. Therefore, to rectify this, we must go to the *tzaddik* for Rosh Hashanah, even if we live in *Eretz Yisrael*. This is because the *tzaddik* shines the light of holiness into the Holy Temple, from which the holiness of all *Eretz Yisrael* emanates, as the Rebbe states.

Therefore, those who argue that it is unnecessary or even wrong to leave *Eretz Yisrael* in order to go to Uman for Rosh Hashanah are in error. The opposite is true. Our love of *Eretz Yisrael* and yearning for its rebirth mandates that we travel to the *tzaddik* for Rosh Hashanah.

#### **"In the Merit of Righteous Women"**

It is a great sacrifice for those women who make it possible for their husbands and sons to leave home and travel to Uman for Rosh Hashanah – especially since this is a Yom Tov, and many of them take upon themselves the extra burden of caring for the rest of their children alone. These women have a major share in all of the *tikkunim* of the *tzaddik*, and their merit is very great. They can be assured that when their husbands return home, they will bring back with them abundant *shefa'*, both materially and spiritually.

#### **"Le'eilah, Le'eilah / Beyond, Beyond"**

It is customary to engage in various spiritual preparations before Rosh Hashanah, and to make good resolutions for the coming year. These things are most praiseworthy. However, the main *tikkunim* of Rosh Hashanah are those that the *tzaddik* uniquely

accomplishes. These are on a completely different plane than our efforts – incomparably so. In fact, it is the power of the *tzaddik* that enables us to do whatever we do.

Similarly, one may experience a great *his'orerus* when one goes to the Rebbe's *tziyun*, or participates in the prayer services with thousands of others. These are surely experiences that we should treasure. However, we should know that the level on which the *tikkunim* of the *tzaddik* take place are far, far beyond what we can experience – even those experiences that we take to be the spiritual highpoints of our lives.