

GUIDE FOR DAVENING ON ROSH HASHANAH RABBI A. Z SAUNDERS

Rosh Hashanah – an overview

The first of Tishrei is when Adam was created, that day being the 6th day of creation. This day is the anniversary of when Hashem our G-d became a King because He had a subject. This is why we re-crown Hashem as our King once again on this day. Rosh Hashanah is also the day on which G-d conducts his audit of the world just like any business would to see how things are going. Who should be made redundant, how many jobs should be created, who should be promoted etc. This is basically what Hashem is doing. That's why we need to make sure we are irreplaceable in G-d's company. We need to make sure all our work is up to scratch and perfect. We need to hand in our growth forecast and predictions for the coming year and hope they meet Hashem's expectations. It's like when local government inspectors come to examine a school - the teachers make sure everything is in tip top shape. Everyone is on their best behaviour, eager to make a good impression.

This is how we should behave during these 10 days of repentance. We need to make sure our deeds are up to scratch. We need to seek forgiveness. It's like G-d gives us an amnesty for our sins and bad behaviour. We need to make the most of this opportunity.

Whilst of course this period is a serious and holy time, one should also be filled with joy and happiness at the prospect of being given the opportunity to crown G-d and daven to Him.

Ein Kamochoh- sung to the normal Shabbos tune.

The Time when the Ark is opened is perhaps the holiest point of the davening. This is the time when G-d's mercy is at its strongest as we are about to read from the Holy Scrolls. That is why we utilise this moment to recite the 13 attributes of mercy and say 'Ribonoh shel olom' This is a prayer for the simple things in life. We pray for;

Food to eat;

Clothes to wear;

Sustenance;

Forgiveness;

and the ability to learn and understand the Torah.

We should not take these basic things for granted. We only need to remember last year when there was food and delivery shortages. Who would of though in today's modern world we could be brought to our knees. These are also the things Jacob prayed for when he slept at the site of the Temple. (Genesis ch. 28 v. 20) He could have asked for anything, but he choose these basic necessities.

The Talmud says that G-d promised Moses that the 13 attributes of mercy will never go unanswered. See additional sheet for explanation of 13 attributes

IF WE COULD ONLY CONCENTRATE AND HAVE FEELINGS FOR ONE PRAYER, THIS SHOULD BE IT.

The Shofar

When listening to the Shofar, one should have in mind to fulfil the Torah's commandment, 'A day of Shofar blowing it should be for you' (Bamidbar ch. 29,v 1) The Shofar is a shrill sound which pierces our eardrums to prompt us to repent and rededicate our lives to G-d.

The time during the blowing of the Shofar is very special and Holy. It is a time when G-d's love for us is very high as we are fulfilling His commandments. One should take this time to think about the ways one can improve one's service to G-d. We can start with little things like:

Coming to shul more often,

Wearing Tzitzit everyday,

Studying more Torah – there are so many books in English now.

There is a 'Midrash (Bereshis Rabbah ch.56, 12) which says 'All through the year the Jews are gripped by sins, but when it comes to Rosh Hashanah they grip the Shofar and are remembered before G-d who forgives all their sins.....'

One should also listen with immense happiness as the Shofar heralds the crowning of Hashem as our King, which is obviously something to be happy about!

MALCHIYOS- KINGSHIP

Oleynu Lesahbeiach

One should have in mind when saying 'Oleinu' to fulfil the commandment of saying the verses that anoint G-d as our King. We should say these verses with great love and affection and immense happiness that we are privileged to re-coronate G-d as our King once again. We should thank Hashem for our Jewish status and for being able to serve Him in the best way possible. We should also yearn to see G-d's Kingdom increased with the coming of Moshiach when everyone will acknowledge G-d as sovereign King and Master of the universe.

ZICHRONOS – REMEMBERING

Ato Zocher

One should have in mind when saying 'Ato Zocher' to fulfil the commandment to acknowledge G-d's ability to remember all our deeds and evaluate them accordingly. WHOOPS. The aim of Zichronos is to try and shift the attention onto Hashem's promises and covenants with our forefathers. These covenants tell of great rewards waiting for us and of our superiority over the other nations. We should try and beg Hashem to remember his covenant with Abraham and Moses.

We also acknowledge that countries and cities are judged too NO ONE IS SAFE WITHOUT HASHEM'S PROTECTION.

Zichronos also reminds us that Hashem does care about us and nothing we do is lost on Him.

SHOFOROS – SHOFOR BLASTS

One should have in mind when saying 'Ato Niglaisoh to fulfil the commandment to recite verses containing Shofor references. We recount the wondrous occasion of the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. We also make reference to the Shofar blasts that will herald the coming of Moshiach, which we hope will be soon in our days (assuming He has not come by the time you read this).

UNESSANEH TOKEF

This is perhaps the most famous Prayer that we recite on the High Holidays. It goes into great detail about what happens in the lofty spheres on these days of judgement. It describes how the Angels react in Heaven on these days. It also brings home to us the realisation of what is at stake. It is not just life and death but the quality of life and the method of death.

‘Who will be killed by storm’-we had storms across the world killing many people including close to home in Florida,

‘Who by the sword’ – look how many innocent people are getting stabbed with knives!!!

‘Who by earthquake’- look at Haiti just a few weeks ago,

‘Who by plague’- needs no explanation in the covid era

‘Who by water’ – look at the storm surges we have seen recently .

‘Who will become rich’- let’s hope everyone. And so on and so forth.

MELECH ELYON –

This is a Poem acknowledging Hashem’s sovereignty in the world which is what the day’s prayers are all about.

VCHOL MAMINIM-

This is a wonderful expression of all our beliefs. These range from Belief in G-d to acknowledging His power. This should be chanted with real meaning - by accepting you believe in all the statements, G-d will become happy with us and forgive our sins and grant us our wishes.

When we leave shul we should go home with a firm belief that Hashem has heard our prayers and granted us our wishes. We should feel happy and be in a good mood. However, one should avoid levity. One is allowed to sleep after davening on Rosh Hashanah afternoon.