



A TIME TO REGAIN Lost Vision

When a baby is in its mother's womb, it can see from one side of the world to the other.¹ Obviously, this cannot be understood on a literal, physical level. What our Sages are conveying to us through this vivid description is that vision is one of the most important aspects of human greatness.

Vision² is the intellectual clarity to grasp the ultimate purpose of life; the emotional power to transcend our current circumstances, to see beyond what's immediately in front of us, and the spiritual inspiration to rise above the travails of life to understand the big picture, the full perspective of why we are here on this earth.

Often, we get so engrossed and entangled in our day-to-day challenges that we don't stop to think about why we are here in the first place, and whether we are fulfilling the purpose for which we were created. In the rush and pressure of daily life, we often lose sight of the bigger, greater picture.³

Rosh Hashanah is a time to step back and regain our lost vision. And the call of the *shofar* is how we do it. The Rambam writes that the message of the *shofar* is to "awaken those who are asleep."⁴ The analogy to sleep is profound. The dreams we experience in our sleep seem so real at the time, yet the moment we wake up we realize they were merely illusions. So too, we often live life in a spiritual slumber. We dream

of accumulating material possessions and indulging ourselves to the greatest extent, and we forget about any higher purpose. The *shofar* is a call from G-d to wake up to that higher purpose – to remember why we are in this world in the first place. A call to regain our vision, to transcend our daily entanglements and return to the basics. A call to our souls to return to the reality of why G-d created us – to live a life of good deeds and in so doing, to make the world a better place.

It is significant that Rosh Hashanah, the day of repentance⁵ and judgment,⁶ takes place on the anniversary of the creation of the world.⁷ There is a deep connection between these two aspects of the day. The fact that G-d created the world means that life has an elevated, Divine purpose. At the heart and soul of the Torah's worldview is the idea that G-d created each and every one of us to carry out a unique mission in this world,⁸ fulfilling His commandments and living life on an elevated plane. People can so easily forget the purpose of life and slip into a dream-like state of being, where trivial matters assume inflated importance and important values are forgotten.

The *shofar*, with its simple call to the clarity of purpose, awakens us to see the world the way it is instead of how it appears when we are in a state of spiritual sleep. G-d has given us the incredible gift of Rosh Hashanah to wake us up and

reconnect us with who we are and why we are here.

Reconnecting with our soul and with our deepest Divine purpose brings invigorating joy. This is why Rosh Hashanah – while being a day of judgment and introspection – is also celebrated as a festival.⁹ It is a day on which we celebrate the profound joy of knowing our mission, of renewing our sense of purpose and recapturing the transcendent vision of life we all saw so perfectly in the womb.

1 Niddah 30b.

2 The Hebrew word *חזון* means both vision and prophecy, see I Samuel 3:1; Isaiah 1:1, Proverbs 29:18.

3 See Mesilat Yesharim, chapter 2.

4 Rambam, Hilchot Teshuva 3:4.

5 Rosh Hashanah is the first of the Ten Days of Repentance. See Rambam, Hilchot Teshuva 2:6.

6 Mishna, Rosh Hashanah 1:2. See Rosh Hashanah 32b; Arachin 10b.

7 See Rosh Hashanah 10b-11a; Vayikra Rabbah 29:1; Pesikta D'Rav Kahanna 23:1; Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 8:1; Bereishit Rabbah 22:4. See also Maharsha, Rosh Hashanah 16a.

8 See Sefat Emet, Parshat Korach, 13:2, quoting his grandfather, Chidushei HaRim on Avot 1:14.

9 See Shulchan Aruch 597:1; Shulchan Aruch HaGraz O.C. 529:5, 597:1.

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