The new year that has just begun is the year 5775, which in Hebrew is referred to as 775 (תשע"ה). One of the numerical allusions to this number is “the jar of manna” (צִנְצֶנֶת הַמָּן).

When the Jewish People left Egypt, on their journey to receive the Torah on Mt. Sinai, they were granted the manna, “Bread from Heaven,” which provided them with sustenance for forty years, “Until they reached a settled land.” God commanded Moses to preserve one omer measure of the manna in a jar that was placed in the Holy of Holies, together with the Ark of the Testimony, to commemorate their eating the manna in the wilderness. The purpose of this preservation was not only to remind us of the loving-kindness that God did for us through His miracles in the desert, but also to reinforce our faith and trust in the fact that God is the one who supplies for and sustains those who commit themselves to Torah study (as the Midrash teaches us that “The Torah was only given to those who ate the manna”). This comes to the fore in particular in the fact that this year is a shemitah (seventh, or sabbatical) year. Anyone who lives in complete faith and trust in God, will live their lives as if they are living in the Garden of Eden. This is alluded to by the fact that the numerical value of “faith” and “trust” (אמוּנָה, בִּטָחוֹן) is equal to the “Garden of Eden” (גַּן עֵדֶן).

During the time of the Prophet Jeremiah, the Jewish People needed to see that manna jar once again, to strengthen their faith and trust in the fact that sustenance comes only from God.
When Jeremiah asked the Jewish People, “Why is it that you don’t occupy yourselves with Torah study?” They replied, “If we occupy ourselves with Torah study, how will we find sustenance?!” At that point, he brought out the jar of manna and said to them “O generation, you see the word of God. Was I a desert to Israel or a land of thick darkness? Why have My people said, ‘We have been separated; we will no longer come to You’? Your forefathers occupied themselves with Torah study, see how they were sustained; if you occupy yourselves with Torah study, I will sustain you.”

Radak interprets “We have been separated” (וּרַדְנוּ) to read, “We have ruled,” [as in the phrase, “And rule over the fish of the sea” (וְּרדוּ בִּדְגַת הַיָם)], meaning that we have a government, kings and ministers, “We will no longer come to You.” From Radak’s words it becomes clear that the root of the people’s lack of trust in God is their negative trust in “government, kings and ministers”—the people are complacent in their trust of the ministers and the government; they have a central authority that “takes care of them” so they have no need to set their faith and trust in God on High. However, when the people publicly rely on flesh and blood, then in the personal realm they also feel that their sustenance depends on their own toil, and they neglect their Torah study and their connection with God.

The “jar of manna” comes to remind us foremost that sustenance comes daily from the Almighty’s open, Holy and over-flowing hand. Therefore, no-one should completely devote themselves to their sustenance in a way that makes them forget their role in this world—the vessel that holds God’s blessing is actually formed by studying Torah and by fulfilling the mission that mankind was created for. This realization has public ramifications—it must release the people from its imagined perspective according to which one can rely on the state and the approach that “government, king and ministers,” are those that allow our existence in the land and therefore we have no more need for God’s loving-kindnesses. The “jar of manna” reminds us all that everything depends entirely on God and we must all come to Him and accept His authority.

It is actually by undermining this imaginary stability that grants the individual faith and trust in the Almighty and allows him to move ahead—because any human framework is limited and is therefore incomparable to the unlimited powers that God fills us with. It is actually by undermining our trust in “government, kings and ministers” that strengthens our ability to observe the mitzvah of appointing a king as the Torah requires us to do; a king who, “Has none above him besides Havayah, his God,” one who boldly depicts the Torah’s vision and aspires to observe it without taking heed of the gentile nations.

Indeed, regarding the mitzvah of the manna jar, the Torah states three times that it was to be “preserved”: “And Moses said, ‘This is the matter that God commanded, a full omer measure of it to be preserved for your generations, so that they see the bread which I fed you in the wilderness’… and God said to Aaron, ‘Take a jar and put into it a full omer measure of manna and place it before God to be preserved for your generations. As God commanded Moses’ and Aaron placed it before the testimony to be preserved.” The first preservation was for the generation of the wilderness; the second preservation was for Jeremiah’s generation; the third preservation is for the days of Mashiach. May it be God’s will that we merit the third preservation—that of Mashiach—in the year 5775 as we become as one with the “jar of manna” in our faith and trust in God alone.

The special quality of the year 5775 (תשע”ה) is “nine months of pregnancy” (תשעה ירחי לידה), i.e., the ability to hold abstract thoughts (that are like the manna—“white coriander seed”—which was semi-spiritual), and to nurture them to maturity and to a successful birth. In this year, may we merit an abundance of births, both physically and spiritually, including the birth of the genuine king that we hope for—Mashiach—of whom it states, “You are My son, I have given birth to you today” (through a consciousness of constant rebirth and renewal), and may it be God’s will that this year be the year of “The mainstay of the home, the mother of children rejoices.”

Wishing the entire Jewish People ✦ a good and sweet year ✦ may we all be written and signed in the book of Eternal Life

Yitzchak Ginsburgh
Protecting Our Sanity from the Serpent’s Venom

Rosh Hashanah is the day God created Adam and Eve, and on that very same day they sinned; they were seduced by the serpent to believe that by eating the forbidden fruit they would become like God.

The serpent’s venom affects its victim’s mind, by contaminating it with delusions of grandeur. While ophidiophobia (fear of snakes) is a fear that has been well-documented, our comprehension of the serpent that sojourns deep within our psyche needs to be further developed.

The sages state, “No-one commits a sin unless a spirit of folly [i.e. temporary insanity] enters him.” Losing one’s mind, or a loss of attention to the outcome of our deeds, opens up the possibility of sin. As long as we are truly aware of the implications and consequences of our actions, we would never allow ourselves to transgress.

Rosh Hashanah—Our Spiritual Anti-Venom

There are three unique blessings in the long Musaf prayer we say on Rosh Hashanah. These three blessings include ten verses that express our coronation of God as King (מלכי מלכיה); ten verses in which we ask God to remember our merits (זיכרונות); and finally, ten verses that mention the blast of the shofar (觱ור). The ram’s horn that will ultimately usher in the final redemption.

Coronating God: The Talmud teaches us that the entire body follows the lead of the head; the seat of the mental faculties that are most prone to the serpent’s venom. Since Rosh Hashanah is the head of the year, it also leads the entire year that will follow. By leaving all our grandiose thoughts of omnipotence behind, we can then coronate the truly omnipotent King of Kings on Rosh Hashanah. By keeping this in mind, we can then ensure that the entire year ahead will be free of sin.

Day of Remembrance: Rosh Hashanah is the Day of Remembrance (יום הזיכרון) when we ask God to remember us only for our merits. Since everything that we ask of God also depends on our own efforts from below, Rosh Hashanah must also be associated with our own memories. The first thing to remember is our Creator, who conceived the world on Rosh Hashanah, as we say in our prayers, “Today the world was conceived.” Furthermore, on Rosh Hashanah we are not allowed to mention sin at all, so this is a good time to remember our own good points. From a psychological point of view, Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Remembrance, is the most auspicious day to counteract the serpent’s venomous attack against our sanity; an attack which often involves a loss of memory.

Shofar: “Blast the shofar on the [new] month.” The sages interpret the word “new month” (חדש) to mean “renew your actions,” and shofar (觱ור) is from the same root as to “improve” (שפר). Renewing and improving ourselves at the start of the year, counteracts the effects of getting stuck in a spiritual, snake-ridden rut.

To add a final thought: when we consider that the Hebrew word for year (שנה) shares the same root with “change” (שינויה), the name of this awe-inspiring Head of the Year (ראש השנה) takes on the new meaning of “mind change.” Indeed, Rosh Hashanah is the spiritually auspicious time to change, renew and improve our mindset, and the perfect antidote to prevent the psychological decline that leads to sin.

Adapted from Rabbi Ginsburgh’s class on Torah and Psychology, Chile, 5769

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“Cock-a-doodle-doo! Our Father in Heaven, Have Mercy!”

The selichot we say during the month of Elul, together with the Rosh Hashanah prayers, channel through to the intense moments of the shofar blast – that simple, coarse sound that expresses the innermost point of the soul.

In the time of the Ba’al Shem Tov, there was a decree of annihilation on one particular Jewish community. When the Ba’al Shem Tov learnt of the dire situation, he prayed fervently during the Days of Awe.

At the ne’ilah prayer, his disciples became aware of the gravity of the situation, and they too made special efforts to pray from the depths of their hearts. When the other congregants saw that the Ba’al Shem Tov and his disciples were crying bitterly, their hearts broke. When they saw that the time for the evening prayer had already arrived and the Ba’al Shem Tov and his disciples were still praying fervently, they all realized that the situation was very grave. The men and women wept profusely and there was a great uproar.

In the synagogue was a rustic shepherd who had come to pray on the Days of Awe, and since he was illiterate, he just listened and silently watched the face of the prayer leader.

Since he was from the countryside he knew how to mimic animal and bird sounds, especially the crow of a rooster. When he heard the weeping and shouting, his heart was broken and he cried out, “Cock-a-doodle-doo! Our Father in Heaven, have mercy!”

When they heard a rooster crow in the synagogue, everyone was appalled, and when they heard him shout, “Our Father in Heaven, have mercy!” they saw that it was the young rustic man.

The worshippers who stood by him tried to silence him and wanted to send him out of the synagogue, but the young man retorted, “I am also Jewish, and your God is my God, too!”

The elderly synagogue attendant, Reb Yosef Yozfa calmed the worshippers and told the shepherd to stay where he was.

The Ba’al Shem Tov, whose face suddenly lit up with joy, began the repetition of the amidah prayer with a special tune, and recited the concluding verses of unifying God’s Name with great arousal and sang joyful songs.

During the meal after the Yom Kippur fast, the Ba’al Shem Tov explained that there had been harsh judgment on one Jewish community and when he had attempted to arouse Divine compassion on them in his prayers, he saw that there was harsh judgment upon him too, because he had made efforts to settle Jewish families in the villages and at junction points and they were liable to learn from their neighbors’ ways, God forbid. The Ba’al Shem Tov concluded, “I saw that their actions were under examination and that the situation of the congregation and my own situation were in dire straits. Then, suddenly, the sound of the shepherd’s call was heard upon High: “‘Cock-a-doodle-doo! Our Father in Heaven, have mercy!” and that innocent call caused great contentment to the highest degree and all the judgments upon the congregation and upon myself were annulled.

The Animal Point of the Soul Root

The Ba’al Shem Tov once told a parable before the sounding of the shofar: a great king once sent his sons out hunting and they lost their way. They shouted out in the hope that their father would hear them but there was no reply, then they said to themselves, we have forgotten our father’s language, therefore he does not heed our call, let’s yell without speaking. They sent one of them to yell, warning him, “Remember that our lives depend on you!”
The moral of this story is that God sent us to elevate holy sparks, but we got lost, and because we have forgotten His language, we can no longer cry out with words. We send you, the shofar blower, to arouse Divine mercy upon us with sound, without speech, but take heed, because we all depend on you.

The mitzvah of shofar is the link that connects all of the Days of Repentance. On the mornings of Elul it wakes us up from sleeping through the follies of time, and arouses us to prepare ourselves for the “Day of Blowing the Shofar” – Rosh Hashanah. Then it returns on Yom Kippur at the moments of elevation that conclude the ne’ilah prayer, with a simple blast.

The uncomplicated sound of the shofar is its hallmark; an animalistic sound that is unbroken by letters or refined expression. Even on Yom Kippur, during the reading of the Prophets during the afternoon prayer service, we find the animalistic motif at the conclusion of the Book of Jonah, “An individual who cannot distinguish between his right and his left, and an abundance of animals.”

“Why do the Jewish People shout, but are not answered? Because they do not know the intentions of the Name.” According to the Chassidic interpretation, the sages’ words take on a deeper meaning—it is neither a Holy Name, nor a letter combination that is required in order to be saved. The problem is far simpler than that – we don’t know how to call God by Name. We might intend one way and think another; but we don’t hit the essential point.

It is actually from the coarsest and most distant point in the synagogue that salvation arrives. When we look for the real secret of God’s Name, the identification that, “You are our Father!” We can never know where it will come from. This is why the righteous must always gather the congregation together in prayer, women and children, the literate and the illiterate.

The rooster-like crow that suddenly broke out was the end of a chain reaction: the Ba’al Shem Tov’s prayer caused his disciples to selflessly devote themselves to their prayers, the disciples’ prayers moved the simple folk to heartbreak, and finally, the rooster crow arose, as if a spring had snapped in the soul of the rustic, who had absorbed all the supplications and could bear them no longer.

Chassidut explains that “Every returning light, returns to its primordial state.” Any arousal from above is referred to as “direct light” the influence of a high light that is sent to illuminate the distanced spark that has forgotten its source. Once the light has achieved its goal, the spark is aroused and wishes to return with immense force. This is the “returning light” – the enormous distance between the lost spark and its source are etched into its soul, and it runs full-force back to its source, so much so that it rises above the source of light that it was searching for.

This is how it is in our service of return to God. Once we realize how much we have forgotten our Father’s language, we understand that the Torah’s wisdom alone cannot save us. The complexity of our entire soul has been bombarded by sins and by our forgetfulness, and all that there is left to do is to make an effort to request the one simple point that has survived—the animalistic point of our soul-root – “But, I was brutish and I did not know; I was [as] a beast with You.”

This is that very same “animalistic” force that searches for God, not by any merit, but merely through un-complex compassion – because You are our Father.
And Moses Was Enraged

**Question:** Is it correct for a teacher to berate a student, or punish them for unsuitable behavior or talking back, while the teacher feels impaired by the same unrefined trait, or while they feel angry or personally hurt by the student’s behavior? What should the teacher’s correct response be to a breach of discipline by a student in class?

**Answer:** Obviously, an educator, like everyone else, is required to observe the sages’ words in Tractate *Avot* (6:1) “And be modest and patient and forgive insults.” Modesty, in terms of being satisfied with little, causes the individual to be patient in the realization that what God has given us is plenty, and I have all that I need, and automatically, they will never become angry, irritated or insulted.

Relating to the educator’s anger, Rebbe Shneur Zalman wrote in *Tanya* (Igeret Hakodesh 25):

> With respect to anger—that one [who becomes angry] is like an idolater. This is so with reference to mundane matters, because, “Everything is in the hands of Heaven except for the fear of Heaven.” Hence, with respect to matters of Heaven, “To warn away from wrongdoing,” the reason stated does not apply, and as it is written: “And Moses was enraged.” This is different because God caused him to encounter this mitzvah of “Warning away from wrongdoing” in order to make him meritorious.

From Moses, we learn that the educator—whose function is to align the student upon their path and “to warn them away from wrong-doing”—is required to show anger towards their student when the student behaves wrongly. Maimonides explains that the educator should not genuinely become angry, rather they should show an angry face for the sake of their educational duty, however, from Rebbe Shneur Zalman’s words, it appears that the educator must indeed become angry to a certain extent, and that such anger is not included in the sages’ statement that “anyone who becomes angry is like an idolater.”

Nonetheless, we learn that the expression, “forgives insults” does not hold for a situation in which one is obliged to “warn them away from wrong-doing,” which is the educator’s task. However, the educator must know how to carry out the task correctly. Rebbe Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, in his leaflet, “The Principles of Education and Guidance” negates the solution of shouting at the student, and certainly negates hitting a child. He explains that even though we might achieve the short-term solution of restoring order, in the long-term, shouting can act like a boomerang and achieve the opposite of what was intended. If the student has come to the point where they are going a little “crazy,” one might consider dismissing them from the class for a limited time, until they calm down. However, one should not send the child home as a punishment for their behavior.

In any case, since the subject here is using judgment, it always needs to be sweetened. Of the three Patriarchs, the attribute of might belongs to Isaac ( יצחק) in particular, whose
name is from the same root as “laughter” (צְחוֹק). In Chassidut there are many lessons to be learnt from the connection between fear (Isaac) and laughter. With reference to education we can learn that using the attribute of judgment should be accompanied by a great deal of laughter.

Laughter serves a number of functions: first of all, we need to know how to smile at the disruptive child—sometimes what they need is a smile and the warmth that radiates from it. Secondly, the educator should make the situation humorous, turning it into a joke, so that the “judgments” that came from the child’s end will also filter out and be lost. The result is, as said, that from a situation full of judgment, both on the child’s behalf and from the necessary rebuke from the educator, it becomes possible to rectify and restore a positive atmosphere.

Finally, both the teachers’ and the students’ desire is that everyone should be happy. In order to reach happiness, the rules need to be kept, while simultaneously keeping a balance between using judgment and laughter. Obviously, this is not an easy piece of advice to heed, and the most important thing is to pray to God that we reach the correct formula, as King David prayed, “And may the pleasantness of the Master our God be upon us, and the work of our hands establish for us, and the work of our hands establish it.” The Almighty is the one who completes our actions according to the desired intention.
הזורעים בדמעה ברינה יקצורו

Here, we arrive at another way of understanding the double movement in "qualities." When we really grow, we are no longer "or or" but at the same time "and and." In the language of Hasidism, this movement is called "carrying over," and it is required in every "marriage" built on carrying over. Our soul can contain in one moment offenses and service. We can be busy with Passover chores, and at the same time sing and rejoice. In the depth of the matter, there is not here just a couple sitting together, but a synthesis, when on each side shines the face of the other side. We can see in Passover the liberation that is in being our servants of the Lord – joy in the commandments, and the commandments that are found in joy.

In the course of the Seder, we are invited to weave together bitterness and happiness. We understand that it is precisely "the sowers of tears" who will "cause the bath to flow," and through tears of mourning our song of the story. We are invited to raise ourselves from the disturbances, to exchange roles, and to reveal new faces. We sit as daughters in peace in the growth of the soul, which will enable us to be righteous and joyful as one.