

The Song of the Angels Here on Earth

This verse, one of the main verses of trust in God in the Bible. “And he who trusts in God – lovingkindness surrounds him” (והבוטח בה' חסד יסובבנו) equals 2 times 136. The first three words of the verse, חסד, והבוטח, בה' חסד, equal 136 and then the final word of the verse, יסובבנו, equals another 136.

The most important word with a value of 136 that is connected to Rosh Hashanah is the word קול, which means “voice.” One of the climaxes of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur prayers is the liturgical poem, *Unetannah Tokef*. At its height, we call out “And repentance and prayer and charity avert the severity of the decree.” In most prayer books, we find that above the words for ‘repentance, charity and prayer’ (ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה) there are small words written in explanation. We do not say these words, but they guide us as to the intention that we should have. Above repentance is the word “fast”, above “prayer” is the word “voice” and above “charity” is the word “money.” The main word of the three is קול (voice), the word written above “prayer.” Our main service is to pray to God. While praying we repent and resolve to perform many acts of charity in the coming year. These three things “avert the severity of the decree.”

Why is the main word of the three for Rosh Hashanah? “Voice.” We know that the main mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah is the shofar.^[1] The blessing that we make on the shofar is “to hear the voice of the shofar.” While the mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah is the shofar, the inner dimension of the mitzvah is the voice. It is not enough to gaze at the shofar. We must hear its voice.

The Feminine Voice

In the Song of Songs it is written, “Make your voice heard to me.”^[2] The voice belongs to the bride, to women. In Kabbalah, sight parallels the attribute of Wisdom and sound parallels the attribute of Understanding. Sight is a more masculine dynamic while sound is a more feminine dynamic. Presently, it is forbidden for men to hear women’s voices singing, for their voice is very beautiful. When Mashiach comes, men will also be allowed to hear women singing.

Your Voice is Pleasant

It is written in *Machzor Rishonim* that the main time to sing is on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This is why there are so many beautiful melodies in the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur prayer service. Just as we must hear the voice of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, so we should also sing in abundance on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

In general, women sing soprano and men sing bass. In music, the soprano is the lead and the bass is the accompaniment. In the future, when reality is rectified, women, with their beautiful soprano voices, will be the lead singers, while men will be the accompaniment.

The Firmament of Millstones – the Source of Confidence

To understand this on a deeper level, let us refer to the Seven Firmaments. The soul descends from God Above through the seven firmaments and enters the body, where it receives its life-mission

The seven firmaments, from below to above, are as follows:[\[3\]](#) *Vilon* (Curtain) parallel to Kingdom; *Rakia* (Firmament) parallel to Foundation; *Shechakim* (Millstones) parallel to Victory and Acknowledgement; *Zevul* (Abode) parallel to Beauty; *Ma'on* (Residence) parallel to Might; *Machon* (Resting Place) parallel to lovingkindness; *Arvot* (Heavens) parallel to Understanding.

The sages relate that in *Shechakim*, where the manna is ground up for the pious people, there are “advising kidneys”[\[4\]](#). In the soul, these advisors are the attributes of Victory and Acknowledgement. Active confidence is associated with the attribute of Victory, while passive confidence is associated with the attribute of Acknowledgement. “He is in Victory (more masculine) and she is in Acknowledgement (more feminine)[\[5\]](#) but like two legs, they must walk together.

The Song of the *Shechakim*

The Midrash *Otiot D'Rabbi Akiva*, writes something wondrous about the *Shechakim*. “Do not read it as *shechakim*, but rather, as *sochakim*, as in the verse, משחקת לפניו (and I was daily all delight, playing always before Him, Playing in His habitable earth...)[\[6\]](#). By simply moving the point above the *shin* of the word *shechakim* from right to left, we receive a completely different word, ‘*sochakim*’ which means ‘play’ or ‘delight.’ There is something in the firmament of *shechakim*, the firmament of Confidence, which is about playing music. The angels in the *Shechakim* are always laughing, singing and playing music. They have drums, harps, violins and more – and they sing and play them constantly.

The image of angels singing and playing music in the Midrash is similar to what is written in the Prophets about the return of prophecy to the Nation of Israel, which is one of the signs of the redemption: “And your sons and daughters shall prophesize”[\[7\]](#). In order to enter into a state of cleaving to God and prophecy, the prophets would walk in nature, singing and playing musical instruments. This is what the angels in the firmament of *Shechakim* do all day. They sing praise and thanksgiving to God all day long.

We can learn an important rule from this: In order to strengthen our confidence in God, we have to sing and play musical instruments. We must reach the firmament of *Shechakim* – or at least create it here on earth – with song and music. Holy delight is song and music, praise and thanksgiving to God.

Sing

The sages teach that there is song from the mouth and song played on musical instruments. Here it is explicitly written that the angels in *Shechakim* both sing and play music. As the two attributes of Victory and Acknowledgement reside in *Shechakim*, it follows that singing parallels Acknowledgement, as both are actions for which we employ our mouths. Musical instruments clearly parallel Victory, *Netzach*, which also means “to conduct” as in conducting an orchestra. The sages also determine that the main dynamic of song is singing – not playing instruments. We can only conclude that singing is more relevant to women, for “She is in Hod (Acknowledgement)” as above. The man accompanies the woman singing while conducting his orchestra.

Song develops our self-confidence, both passive and active. Song develops our more passive confidence, while it is specifically playing a musical instrument that can develop our active confidence.

This Rosh Hashanah, be sure to pray by singing your heart out to God, confident in His forgiveness and imminent redemption.

[1] *Rosh Hashanah* 3:3.

[2] Song of Songs 2:14.

[3] *Chagigah* 12b.

[4] *Brachot* 61a/ Also see *Tikunai Zohar* 48; *Tanya Igeret Hakodesh* 15.

[5] *Eitz Haim* 36:8.

[6] Proverbs 8:30-31.

[7] Joel 3:1.