

R' Levi Yitzchok quotes the famous Gemara (בבא בתרא י" ע"ב & פסחים נ' ע"א) which we know is referring to olam hazeh vis-a-vis olam haba: עולם הפוך ראיתי - The world is upside down. R' Levi Yitzchok had a very ingenious take on this, and it's actually an indictment which we'll have to answer and we will.

He says in the olden days, אמאל'דיגע צייטן, as I say in Yiddish, a person used to deal honestly in his business. He would do his business honestly, he did everything properly, and he never let out a lie from his mouth. That was in the in the old days. He would go into shul and he would start saying אשמנו בגדנו גזלנו on וידוי, and there was not any drop of truth to it because they did not do אשמנו בגדנו, they were honest people. So it turns out that the in the הכנסת בית he was lying and outside he was telling the truth. He says, today is פונקט פארקערט. People cheat and lie and rob and steal as much as they possibly can to get away with making as much money as they can. And then what do they do? They go to shul and they say אשמנו בגדנו גזלנו. So he says it's an עולם הפוך.

Now, how do we combat that? First of all, we have to do תשובה. And we have to try to be honest in everything that we do, both business-wise and with everyone around us, and try as hard as we can, particularly in these days of יום כיפור and עשרת ימי תשובה, to try to do whatever we can to be as straight and as truthful as we can be. It's a tremendous challenge. We're so used to absolute out-and-out שקר all around the world. We know that אמת is a very rare commodity, it's hard to find. The letters א' מ' ת' are the furthest apart, whereas the letters ש' ק' ר' are next to each other. So it's our moral obligation, our אחריות, our responsibility and job to try to do something better, to try to make ourselves better in everything that we do.

Now, in that light, there's a Gemara (ראש השנה ל"ב ע"ב) that's brought down by R' Yechezkel Levenstein, the ashgach ruchani of the Mir. אמר רבי אבהו: אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא. The מלאכים said to Hashem: רבונו של עולם! מפני מה אין ישראל אומרים שירה לפניך בראש השנה וביום הכפורים? Interesting question. We wouldn't have thought of that, but the מלאכים did. These are days of קדושה and on days of קדושה, it's our job to say שירה before Hashem. Hashem answered them and said the answer which we all know: אפֿשֿר - The book of life and the book of death is open in front of the king who's about to make a judgment; וישראל אומרים שירה? In that Gemara, there's a famous חסד. We know and we count upon, we look forward to Hashem's אמונה, not because we deserve it, but because we're davening for it, and we hope to have it. And maybe we should work on our אמונה as well. Anyway, whatever the reason is, we have בטחון in הקדוש ברוך הוא, who will find us במשפט. We made it since last year after all. We're still here, those of us who are here. זכאי בדין. Those of us who are here. We should learn a lesson from those who are not here. זכאי בדין. But those of us who are here, so we see that we have אמונה that הקדוש ברוך הוא will find us בדין. So therefore, we should be saying שירה! So R' Yechezkel Levenstein asks in his שיחה, why therefore don't we say שירה on ראש השנה and יום כיפור?

He gives a very interesting answer. What are the last three letters of the first three words in the torah? אמת, אמת, אמת. Yes, the letters are very far apart, but they are there right at the beginning of the torah. The חותם, the seal of הקדוש ברוך הוא is אמת. Therefore, it is our responsibility to be דבוק בהשם, to follow in Hashem's ways and דרכיו, to also be אמת'דיק, to say the truth. Even if we have the אמונה that we will be found זכאי, and we're certain of that, we're confident of that, however, you can't have שמחה in that situation, because at the end of the day, it is a day of דין. It is a day of ספרי חיים וספרי מתים, which is exactly what הקדוש ברוך הוא told the מלאכים. That being the case, there is this element of fear, of the dread of הדין. If you have the proper השקפה and attitude and not think that this is just סתם, a happenstance. If we really understand what ראש השנה and יום כיפור are all about, we cannot possibly say שירה, because we still have to appreciate and have יראת שמים and יראת חטא. In the having both of those qualities, may we indeed be found זכאי בדין and have a גוט געבענטשט געזונט יאר.

