

In honor of ראש השנה, I'd like to go over a number of little vignettes, little stories to give us a better handle on how we should be approaching ראש השנה. The following מעשה was related by R' Hersh Mesharais, R' Tzvi Hirsch HaKohen of Rimanov, who was a chassid of R' Mendel of Rimanov, a world-class chassidish Rebbe and צדיק.

R' Hersh Mesharais quotes from his Rebbe R' Mendel that once they were davening ערב ראש השנה. Now as all of you who say שליחות know, the ערב ראש השנה שליחות is enormous. It takes at least an hour if you do it fast and two hours if you do it right. When they got to these words, אָמֵן שְׁבוּ קִלְם, בְּלֵב וְנֶפֶשׁ לְחִלּוּתָךְ, which means if they really did תשובה correctly, and they are searching for you Hashem with all their לב and their נפש, with their heart and soul, R' Mendel paused, and the people who were being מתפלל with him thought he was having some deep כוונות about the שמות of Hashem. However, there were three great צדיקים saying שליחות with R' Mendel: R' Naftali of Ropshitz, R' Yaakov of Premishel, and R' Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, the בני יששכר. They said to the people, "No, you're making a mistake if that's what you think the Rebbe was thinking about. He wasn't thinking about the שמות of Hashem at all. What he did was, he took upon himself that he would not continue with שליחות until he was able to put into every person in his shul the כח to do תשובה with all of their heart and all of their soul."

The concept of just hearing about the fact that we should be doing this with all of our might is an extraordinarily powerful concept. Do we really want this with all of our heart and soul, or are we just running through it? Let's give a thought for at least one second, maybe I would like to do this with all my heart and soul, and I hope I have the זכות one day to be able to achieve that.

That's the first story of the three that I'm going to tell you. What are we asking for? We're asking for all of the good things in עולם הזה. On מוסף of ראש השנה, a great Rebbe was asked by the Gerrer Rebbe no less, "Could you please tell me something over from that you heard from R' Yossele of Torchin, the son of the חוזה?" The Rebbe replied, "I don't remember any דברי תורה, but I remember one of his stories. One ראש השנה, right before שופר blowing, R' Yossele came into the בית מדרש and he said to his מתפללים, some of whom were no doubt thinking at that auspicious moment for all their בקשות to Hashem for the upcoming year. That's what שופר blowing is all about. We're davening that Hashem should fulfill all of our בקשות לטובה."

R' Yossele said to them "I'm not going to give you מוסר. I'm not going to teach you דברי תורה. I'm going to tell you a story. In a certain city, there once lived a learned and wealthy wine merchant who was honored one day by a visit from the local rav. Feeling deeply privileged, the host went out of his way to show his guest every due mark of respect. He quickly sent a servant down to the middle barrel of the third row. This was the choicest wine that he had. He himself continued to maintain scholarly conversation with this distinguished guest, but when he had waited a surprisingly long time for his servant to return, he begged to be excused, raced down to find out what was amiss. He was stunned by what he saw there. Some of the barrels had been left uncovered, others being drained of their precious contents because the taps had been left open. Broken bottles jutted out of the puddles of wine on the floor, and the servant was nowhere to be seen. He returned to the house, sorely grieved by the serious damage which his servant had caused him and began to look for him and called him by name. He finally answered from a cozy nook near the fireplace where he was sprawled at his leisure. And from up there, from his place where he was resting, he called out to his master, "Listen here, I want you to increase my salary, it isn't nearly enough!" The Gerrer thanked the Rebbe and said, "I call that a very fine משל."

Having said that, I want to give you, read you something to put things in a frame of mind with which we will be much more comfortable. One year, no less than Reb Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev spent a long time in search for a person worthy of blowing the שופר in his מדרש בית ראש השנה. Many righteous folks sought the privilege, vying with each other and demonstrating their expertise in the



abstruse kabbalistic secrets associated with the שופר. None of them were to Reb Levi Yitzchok's taste. One day, a new applicant came along. Reb Levi Yitzchok asked him on what dread mysteries he meditated while performing this awesome מצוה. "Rebbe", said the newcomer, "I'm a simple fellow. I don't understand too much about the hidden things of the תורה. But I have four daughters of marriageable age, and when I blow the שופר, this is what I have in mind: 'רבונו של עולם, right now I'm carrying out your will. I'm doing your מצוה, I'm blowing the שופר. Please You do what I want and help me marry off my daughters'". "My friend," said Reb Levi Yitzchok, "you will blow the שופר in my shul."

This man meant it. That's the bottom of the bottom line of the story. We have to mean what we say and not just rattle off. We have to daven with כוונה. We have to daven for our families, for our משפחות. We're davening for the whole year. We're davening for all of כלל ישראל. We're davening for ארץ ישראל. We're davening נעבעך for all the people who need ישיעות and נחמות and רפואות. And בעזרת השם, we should have a כתיבה וחתימה טובה.

