

# DEVEIKUS DONE TWICE

*by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein*

## Deveikus Done Twice<sup>1</sup>

Can two be one? Apparently so, according to the sefarim ha-kedoshim. Halacha treats the two days of Rosh Hashanah as one long day.[2] The kernel idea that animates this halacha is that the two days are assigned separately to ahavah and yirah, which - working apart, not together - produce deveikus.

Ahavah and yirah - love of Hashem and reverence for Him - are two all-important pillars of our relationship with HKBH. They tug at our heartstrings in very different ways. Mentally and emotionally, they draw out different responses from us. We shift inner gears between them. The dynamic relationship between them seems to be one of sharing the burden, of covering different aspects of ourselves.

Rosh Hashanah is different. Its purpose is the renewal of Hashem's covenant with the world. The role of the Jewish people is crucial to that covenant, because His goals for human history depend on our carrying forth His message. We, in turn, cannot function in that role without a strong attachment to Him - in a word: deveikus. The bottom line is that aspects of ahavah and yirah must each in a brief period of time arrive at the same place - namely, a rejuvenated, fierce sense of connection between Klal Yisrael and its Creator.

Ahavah intuitively leads to deveikus. Yirah, however important, would not seem to get to the same place. When fear and overwhelming we enter a relationship, we tend to flee in fright, or at least draw back. How can yirah lead to deveikus?

Peri Ha-aretz[3] explains. The awe arises in part from our realization of Hashem as the complete and absolute Giver, and ourselves as complete receivers. Focusing further upon this, we realize that we do not merely owe myriad blessings and favors to Hashem; we owe Him everything. Without Him, we cease to be. Understanding our complete dependence upon Him, we can more readily give up our sense of self to Him, and arrive at a place of complete bitul.

The centrality of deveikus on Rosh Hashanah manifests itself in several other ways as well. We can easily see it peeking out in the Three Books in which we are all inscribed. The tzadik merits immediate inscription in the Book of Life, while the beinoni, intermediate between the tzadik and the evildoer, navigates the Ten Days of Repentance before he is inscribed. Both must attain some level of deveikus to renew the relationship with Hashem for another year. The tzadik accomplishes this on

Rosh Hashanah, and needs wait no longer to be inscribed for life. The beinoni takes longer. He requires the Aseres Yemai Teshuvah to get him there, and therefore must wait.

Tekias shofar as well is shaped by the need to get to deveikus. In times of war, we sound a teruah with the chatzotzros to rouse the camp.[4] Here, it is associated with yirah. The Torah also commands, however, to use the same chatzotzros to sound a tekiah in joyful accompaniment of our offerings in the beis ha-mikdash. Here it is used as an instrument of ahavah. On Rosh Hashanah, of course, we combine the two sounds, making yirah and ahavah equally important paths to the deveikus we seek. Shofar itself is linked to both. It inspires awe: "Will a shofar be sounded in a city, and the people not tremble?"[5] It also figures in the pomp and ceremony surrounding the coronation of a king. We signify - with great ahavah and joy - our yearly coronation of the King through the tekiah.

For all its seriousness, we do not treat Rosh Hashanah with cold sobriety. Still listening to the ancient command of the prophet Nechemiah, we treat Rosh Hashanah like a Yom Tov in regard to the clothes we wear and the festive meals we consume. Deveikus cannot coexist with feelings of depression and futility. (The shedding of tears prescribed by the Ari z"l must come from a sense of longing for Hashem, not from depression and futility.) The Yom Tov conduct is an adjunct to developing the sought-after deveikus; it rides a crest of bitachon in Hashem's chesed.

Deveikus, though, is such a tall order! How do we get there, especially when at a time that we are unusually aware of our misdeeds and shortcomings? A marvelous parable guides us. A lowly soldier stands in wait, part of the honor guard along the route that the king is expected to travel. The king's arrival is significantly delayed. Being a hot day, the soldier uses the extra time to freshen up. He sheds his clothes, and takes a dip in the river. Unexpectedly, he hears the approach of the king's entourage, approaching quite rapidly. This plunges him into a state of confusion and doubt. Hardly in a state to receive the king, perhaps he should hide himself? On the other hand, his job calls for him to be on hand to honor the king.

He decides that he simply cannot lose the opportunity to receive the king, and stands naked and exposed at his post. While others are horrified, the king discerns that his subject's behavior proves that he values the honor of the king more importantly than his own shame and embarrassment. Instead of punishing him as his advisors, aghast at the bizarre sight, suggest, he bestows a medal upon the soldier for his devotion. This is our job exactly - to present ourselves before the King on Rosh Hashanah. Despite seeing ourselves as naked and exposed, we must nonetheless appear at his coronation, and look towards His compassion, hoping that our service will be lovingly accepted.

Our approach helps show why an apparent inequity is not what it seems to be. "He perceives no sin in Yaakov, and saw no perversity in Yisrael."[6] Hashem, of course, sees everything. If He fails to notice the faults of Jews, it can only be that He decides that He will not see! This is hardly fair. It is inconsistent with His justice that he should play favorites.

The continuation of the verse is sometimes invoked to provide an explanation: "Hashem his G-d is with him." The sin of a Jew is never a full-blown act of rebellion and defiance. A proper Jew never manages to squeeze the full experience of sinning out of the act. He may capitulate to his yetzer hora in a moment of weakness, but even as he sins, his pleasure is curtailed. While in the very process of transgression, he already feels stung by the sense of betraying HKBH, of disobeying the G-d Whom he loves.

Our approach, however, offers an alternative explanation. The pasuk suggests a different truth about our behavior. Even after committing some sin, "Hashem...is with him." A Jew rebounds from his indiscretions, and finds a way to renew his connection, reestablish his deveikus with Hashem.

This deveikus is the antidote to so much of what is wrong about us. Deveikus purifies us, brings atonement to us. Aveirah simply cannot coexist with the presence of HKBH. Its inherent deficiency is incompatible with His perfection. Those burdened by awareness of their considerable flaws will find solace in this. Deveikus is indeed possible for us on Rosh Hashanah, and in it we will find the way to surmount what we do not like and accept about our inner selves.

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1. Based on Nesivos Shalom, pgs. 113-115
  2. Beitzah 30B
  3. Parshas Ekev
  4. Bamidbar 10:9
  5. Bamidbar 10:10
  6. Bamidbar 23:21
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