

OVERLOOK IT WHEN YOU'VE BEEN WRONGED

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

This Shabbos begins the two day holiday of Rosh Hashana--the Day of Judgment. Let's try to get a better understanding of this judgment on Rosh Hashana and then move on to some practical ways to ready ourselves for this holy day.

Rav Kruspdai taught that three books are opened on Rosh Hashana; one for the wicked, one for the righteous and one for those in-between. The righteous are immediately written and sealed for life while the wicked are immediately written and sealed for death. Those in-between are left 'hanging' until Yom Kippur [the Day of Atonement]--if they merit, they are inscribed for life, if they don't, they are inscribed for death.

The Tosafos there challenges this statement with the question that I imagine is bothering most of us. Many people who seem to be quite righteous don't live out the year. Their death reveals to us that at the previous Rosh Hashana these righteous were inscribed for death. At the same time, people such as Saddam Hussein seem to make it from Rosh Hashana to Rosh Hashana, astonishingly inscribed for life year after year...

The Tosafos explains that the death of the wicked and the life of the righteous that is mentioned in this statement refers to life in the World to Come.

At first glance this seems to be very strange. The judgment of a person's status in the World to Come takes place, not on Rosh Hashana but rather, after death. Only at that point can the life in its entirety be assessed and judged. Furthermore, even if we'll say that the judgment does take place on Rosh Hashana, why is there a need for a person to be judged every Rosh Hashana? Only on the final Rosh Hashana of a person's lifetime should the judgment take place. Then, after death, there can be another judgment on what might have transpired between that last Rosh Hashana and the time that the person's soul returned to its Maker.

The Sifsei Chaim explains in the following manner, based on the Ramcha"l and the Gr"a. The judgment of Rosh Hashana establishes the spiritual state and standing of a person. Is he a person who, through his actions, is ultimately heading for the World to Come? That is the world of eternal life. Such a person is inscribed for life. One who is not heading in that direction is inscribed for death. Once that has been determined on Rosh Hashana, then the specific judgment of what will befall him that particular year will be determined accordingly.

Tranquillity and riches might be served to a person who was inscribed for death in order that he'll be

properly compensated for any good that he did perform in this world. Similarly, hardships might befall a person inscribed for life thereby cleansing him of any transgressions committed in this world, clearing the path for his eternity.

At the same time, one who has been inscribed for life might not need the 'jolt' given by difficulties and his judgment for that year might be one of tranquillity and riches. One who has been inscribed for death might need the shock of a tragedy in order to shake him out of his stupor and force him to reassess his priorities and lifestyle.

With this understanding of the seriousness and the far reaching implications of this judgment, what can one do to try improve their chances for a positive judgment?

Rav Chaim Shmuelovitz zt"l offers some advice.

The Talmud [Rosh Hashana 17A] teaches that one who is "ma'aveer ol midosov" [willing to overlook it when he's been wronged] has his transgressions overlooked. Rashi there explains that the Attribute of Justice doesn't scrutinize such people or their actions. The 'mirror in the sky' reflects onto us the way that we treat others.

The Talmud there continues with the story of Rav Huna who had nearly died but then rejoined the living. Upon being asked what he had witnessed while being in that state he explained that although the decree was that he should die, Hashem Himself had interceded and granted him more life in the merit of his having been a "ma'aveer ol midosov."

If being "ma'aveer ol midosov" can bring a person back to life, it will certainly help a person to be inscribed for life.

Another idea, based on this same concept, is that in order for us to expect Hashem to have compassion on us, we must be compassionate to others. By our viewing others as Hashem's children and creations and showing them the compassion that they deserve, we can thereby 'earn' Hashem's compassion.

Those two ideas were demonstrated brilliantly by Rabi Yosi ben Yoezer as he was being led out on a horse to be executed. His irreverent nephew approached him, riding a horse on the Sabbath, and taunted him saying, "look at the horse that my master gives to me and look at the horse that your Master gives to you!"

Rabi Yosi overlooked the incredible audacity of this nephew taunting him at such a time and focused all of his compassionate thoughts on utilizing this opportunity to influence him. He turned to his nephew and said, "if Hashem does that for those who anger Him, imagine what will be done for those who fulfill His will."

His stunned nephew responded, "is there anyone who fulfilled Hashem's will more than you?"

Rabi Yosi then moved in for the kill. "If Hashem punishes the wrongs of those who fulfill His will,

imagine what will be done to those who anger Him." The words found their mark, entering this nephew like the venom of a snake. He repented completely and entered the World to Come even before his uncle, Rabi Yosi.

Good Shabbos and a Shana Tova. May you be inscribed in the Book of Life and be blessed with a year of happiness, growth and tranquillity,

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