

# POOR BEGINNING, WEALTHY END

*by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner*

This year, with Rosh HaShanah being celebrated on Shabbos and Sunday, our regular parsha Torah reading is preempt. As such, I will deviate from my regular format and share some thoughts on Rosh Hashanah.

An interesting thing occurred this morning. I woke up with my day pretty much planned and set. I had already decided what I would later write for my parsha and I had my morning *shiur* [Talmud lesson] all photocopied and ready to go. As I said, everything was all set... until I sat down with my guys, distributed the photocopies and realized that I had copied the wrong page.

Feeling a bit hot under the collar, I told them about a certain Rav who was a world-renowned public speaker. His *Rabbeim* [mentors] had told him that when a certain thought, story or parable would fall into his mind while speaking; he should share it with the audience. The heavens had decided that someone there must have to hear that thought.

With that introduction I told them that Hashem must have wanted us to learn the page that I had mistakenly copied and we began. Ultimately, it wasn't only my morning shiur that got revamped, as I decided to build my parsha on the *Gemara* [Talmud] that I learned today and the thoughts that came out in the conversation.

The Talmud [Rosh Hashana16B] teaches in the name of Rav Yitzchak: Every year that is poor at its beginning becomes wealthy in the end.

The Tosafos explain this quite literally. When the Jews are poor, their hearts are broken. This arouses Hashem's mercy that manifests itself in the wealth that the year will ultimately bring.

Rashi offers a different explanation. He explains that when *Yisroel* [Israel] make themselves as if they are poor on Rosh Hashanah and they plead as they pray, Hashem accepts their prayers and sends them a bountiful year.

We discussed how Rosh Hashanah is the time when we coronet Hashem as the King of the world. The focus of the prayers is not on our own personal needs but on the hope that the world will recognize Hashem and appreciate all that He does.

With that we had a better understanding of this poorness that Rav Yitzchak was discussing. It is the recognition that all that we have and all that we own are not really the direct results of our own achievements. We can make the effort and attempts but the degree of our success is solely in

Hashem's hands. As such, we are really quite poor.

Hashem hopes to encourage us to build a relationship with Him through that which He gives to us. If a person thinks he's doing it all on his own with the strength of his own hands, then the way for Hashem to deliver a wake-up call to such a person is by withholding His *bracha* [blessing]. On the other hand, if we recognize just how poor we really are and that all that comes our way is a gift from Hashem, then any *bracha* will reinforce and strengthen our connection to Him. By doing so we open up the spigots of *bracha* allowing that year which started out so 'poor' to end up so bountiful.

My wife and I felt that we had experienced this in a very first-hand sort of way. As of a few weeks before Rosh Hashanah last year, we had been blessed with six wonderful children. All of the pregnancies had gone smoothly and the children were all born full-term and healthy. We began to expect that as almost a given and perhaps had become a bit complacent in regard to the myriad miracles which contribute to a healthy child.

We were woken from our dream when my wife miscarried late in her pregnancy, just a few weeks before Rosh Hashanah last year. We went into that Rosh Hashanah feeling empty and humbled. We felt Hashem's reign over the world vis-à-vis our own ineptitude and helplessness. That Rosh Hashanah was as poor as it gets.

"Every year that is poor at its beginning becomes wealthy in the end." Amazingly, we merited experiencing the fulfillment of the second half of Rav Yitzchak's words. The feeling of poverty, the recognition of where all 'riches' emanate from, opens up the pipeline for incredible *bracha* to come flowing through. Exactly ten days before Rosh Hashanah this year, we were blessed with the most precious wealth imaginable as my wife delivered a beautiful, healthy baby girl.

"Every year that is poor at its beginning becomes wealthy in the end." *A k'siva v'chasima tova*. May you be blessed with a healthy and happy year of growth and productivity, recognizing and accepting the dominion of the King of kings in this world.

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