



FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER

OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT



Core Goodness & Boundless Potential

Harav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal, *Hashem yikom damo*, was a prominent Slovakian rabbi who was ultimately murdered in the Holocaust and whose view of the world was radically transformed by it. Ironically, while for many that dark period dashed their optimism and idealism and destroyed their trust in G-d and humanity, his perspective evolved in exactly the opposite direction. As keenly aware as he was of the painful upheavals – both internal and external – that the Jewish people were experiencing, he identified within the hell that had broken loose around him the seeds that would plant the Garden of Eden in *Eretz Yisrael*.

One of the central elements of that perspective was his view of Jews who lived their lives differently than he and not in line with the tradition, sometimes even opposed to it. His outlook is not only valuable for how we view and relate to other Jews; it offers clarifying and uplifting insight into ourselves, particularly relevant during this season of judgment and *teshuva*.

In his classic work (*Eim Habanim Semeicha*, Ch 3 nos. 88-89), he shares two such insights into the verse that traditionally launches us into the first Amidah of Rosh

Hashana, our first opportunity to be *omeid b'fnei Hamelech*, to stand in G-d's presence on this day of affirmation of His Kingdom:

Tiku bachodesh shofar. "Sound the Shofar at the moon's renewal, at the appointed time for our festive day, for it is a statute for Israel, judgment day for the G-d of Yaakov." (Tehillim 81:4)

Why does the verse attribute the judgment of Rosh Hashana to *Elokei Yaakov*, the G-d of Jacob, specifically associating Yaakov with this Day of Judgment? This question is addressed in the Midrash Tehillim.

Avraham experienced a crushing disappointment and loss in his life. His first child, Yishmael, had to be sent away and would not remain part of his true family, part of

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Dr. Henry C. Romberg ז"ל
Beloved
husband,
father, and
grandfather,
we miss you!
נלב"ע כ"ט אלול
תשס"ה



the eternal Jewish people. This was also the fate of the sons he had later in his life with Keturah. Avraham had many children, but many of them were lost to the future of our people.

Yitzchak had a similar experience. He had only two sons, twins, but one of them – the first, his personal favorite – would not remain part of the eternal Jewish people.

Only Yaakov had the distinction of *mitaso sheleima*, all his children remaining forever part of the Jewish people. In the words of the Sages, with the children of Yaakov a new rule applied: *Yisrael af al pi shechita Yisrael hu*, even a Jew who sins remains forever part of our people. That is why his name is mentioned here.

The message, taught Rav Teichtal, is that as we stand on this Day of Judgment, we are being judged by the G-d of Yaakov, the G-d Who consider us His children despite our failings and Who will never let go of us as He evidently sees in us the inherent goodness that makes our bond unbreakable. We stand before the G-d of the truly eternal Jewish people.

That is one critical perspective.

The Midrash continues with another aspect of Yaakov that we affirm on this day, invoking another well know distinction between our *avos*.

All three of our forefathers visited the site of the future Temple. Avraham described it as a mountain, Yitzchak as a field, and Yaakov as the House of G-d. It was only Yaakov who could see beyond what the place looked like here and now; Yaakov saw in it the potential, the possibilities, the vision of what could and would be there.

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We too, today on Rosh Hashana, stand before the G-d of Yaakov. We stand here not simply as who we are but as who we can be, with a vision for being better, more perfect people. We know that the G-d of Yaakov will recognize the value of that within us, will see beyond where we are to where we aspire to be.

As we stand before the G-d of Yaakov this Rosh Hashana, we would do well to recognize our core goodness as the children of Yaakov and build for ourselves a vision for who we can be and who we aspire to be.

May we all be blessed with a *ketiva vachatima tova*. ■

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