

# א ביסל תורה

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א' תשרי תשפ"ד · ראש השנה-האזינו

## Finding ברכות in Curses

By Ariel Jeselsohn '26

In this week's פרשה האזינו, פרשה פרשה, for most of the פרשה פרשה, בני ישראל curses משה, and tells them all the terrible things that will happen to them in the future in the form of a song. One of those curses/punishments is that in the פסוק which goes as follows: "אֶסְפֶּה עֲלֵימוֹ רְעוֹת חֲצֵי אֶבְלֵה־בָּם," "I will put misfortunes on them, and use up My arrows on them." At first glance, this seems like it is obviously a curse. However רש"י, coming from the גמרא in סוטה, says otherwise. The גמרא in סוטה דף ט. asks: what does the פסוק in מלאכי mean when it says, "כִּי אֲנִי ה' לֹא שֹׁנֵיתִי," "for I am ה', unchanged, and you are the children of יעקב, you have not ceased to be" The גמרא then answers and says that "אֲנִי ה' לֹא שֹׁנֵיתִי" means that ה' never struck a nation and struck them again, meaning that ה' always defeated nations after the first blow, and never had to strike again. The גמרא then says that "וְאַתֶּם בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב לֹא כָלִיתֶם" has the same meaning as the פסוק from our פרשה which was just quoted: "אֶסְפֶּה עֲלֵימוֹ רְעוֹת חֲצֵי אֶבְלֵה־בָּם," which means that ה's arrows, which He will use on בני ישראל, will be consumed, and used up, but nevertheless, בני ישראל will not be consumed and wiped out. Using this idea, רש"י says on this פסוק that the curse, according to the language of the punishment, implies a ברכה. That ברכה being that no matter what punishment ה' inflicts upon בני ישראל, they will survive.

בני ישראל adds to רש"י, saying that ה' punishes בני ישראל with so many different misfortunes, yet at the same

time He gives בני ישראל the strength to outlast them all. רב הירש is adding that בני ישראל are going to sin, and that is why ה' is punishing them in the first place. Nevertheless, ה' still loves us, so He gives us strength to outlast the punishment and stay in existence. Even though we angered ה' through our sins, and we defied Him, ה' has mercy on us out of his love for the Jewish people.

This idea in רש"י and רב הירש relates to the גמרא in קידושין דף לו עמוד ב. The גמרא there quotes the פסוק in which says: "בְּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם," "you are the children of ה' your G-d." Then the גמרא quotes the opinion of רבי מאיר, who learns from this פסוק that even when we do not act like בני, which means with the will of ה', we are still considered בני in the eyes of ה'. This means that ה' will be merciful towards us, like we ask ה' many times during סליחות to be merciful towards us "ברחם אב על בנים," "like a father has mercy on his sons." And to support his view, רבי מאיר quotes many פסוקים where it attributes negative characteristics to בני ישראל, and still calls them בני in the same פסוק. The תורה even goes so far as to say that even when בני ישראל worship זרה עבודה זרה, they are still considered בני in the eyes of ה'. The fact that we are considered בני to ה', no matter how bad of an עבירה we commit, shows the power of תשובה, and the רחמנות of ה'. No matter how bad of a sin we commit, it is never too late to do תשובה, and ה' will always forgive us. Even when it might seem like ה' is angry at us, and there is no chance for forgiveness, there is always a chance to do תשובה, and we should never give up, because ה's mercy is infinite.

Now, in the עשרת ימי תשובה, we are nearing יום כיפור, and we should try to seize every opportunity to do תשובה, and cry out to ה'. We should not think that since יום כיפור is right around the corner, it is too late to do תשובה, and that we have already been judged by ה'. No! We should still say סליחות with בוונה, and we should still Daven with all of our hearts, because no matter how many times we have sinned in the past, or no matter how deep of a hole we feel we are in, ה' will always have mercy on us if we do תשובה. And with that, I wish everyone a חתימה טובה, and we should all be זוכה to be written in the ספר היים-The Book of Life.

## Our Role in Time: Now and Forever

By Eliana Goldenholz '26

In the ראש השנה davening, we repeatedly state: ה' מלך; ה' is King, ה' was King, ה' will be King forever." This powerful phrase emphasizes ה' control over all time. But what does this really mean for us, who live within the limits of time?

Let's begin by exploring time itself. Humans are privileged—and burdened—by our awareness of time. We can reflect on the past, dream of the future, and most importantly, make choices in the present.

On ראש השנה, we are confronted with the theme of Hashem's eternal kingship. Time is fluid for Hashem. From His perspective, there is no past, present, or future—everything exists in an eternal now. As רמב"ם teaches in מורה נבוכים, God's essence transcends time, for He created Time itself. Our finite minds struggle to grasp this concept, but ראש השנה invites us to reflect on it. The essence of Hashem's kingship is timeless, yet it is expressed in every single moment of our existence.

This idea ties into one of the names of יום ראש השנה—the Day of Remembrance. What are we remembering? More precisely, whose memory are we invoking? We are trying to connect with the Ultimate Memory—that of ה'. His "memory" isn't a recollection in the human sense. It is an active, present engagement all of the time. Every action, every word, every intention is ever-present before ה'.

This brings us to the שופר. The שופר serves as both a wake-up call and a bridge to eternity. הלכות רמב"ם in תשובה (פרק ג:ד), writes that the שופר's sound is like a spiritual alarm, crying out: "Awaken, you who are asleep, and reflect on your deeds." It calls us to realize that our brief moments in this world are opportunities to do good, to elevate ourselves (and the world around us). It's a reminder that every second is important, every action can ripple through time, and will be forever remembered before ה'.

But תשובה—repentance—also plays a vital role. תשובה is about more than regret for the past. It's about recreating the self and transforming the present moment by realigning ourselves with our divine mission. When we engage in תשובה, we aren't just fixing the past—we're reshaping our entire timeline, ensuring that the moments ה' sees, the "snapshots", are the best ones we can offer.

This is the profound gift of the present: ה', the timeless King, grants us the now, the opportunity to change, to connect to His eternal kingship, and to give our fleeting moments eternal meaning.



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