

Rosh Hashana 2014

1.

Kemetzei Shlal Rav pages 127-128

We learn on Rosh Hashana the akadas Yitzchak. The question arises; **why was the knowledge of the akada withheld from Sarah?** (Rashi (beginning of parshas Chayai Sarah) informs us that Sarah didn't know about the akada.) Especially since Sarah was a prophetess. Rabbi Moshe Lev Shachor (Avnei Shohum (page 44)) answers, **if Sara would have known the extent of how Avraham would be tested then she certainly would allow this to occur. Avraham performing the akada, therefore, wouldn't be completely for the sake of heaven. He wouldn't have gone through with the akada just because Hashem said so; rather it would also be because his wife said so as well. The will of Hashem was that Avraham would solely listen to Him.**

**Another answer as to why Sara didn't know about the akada is the following. This strengthened the severity of the test. Avraham was to take his only son without the agreement and knowledge of his wife. If Sara would have known then the test would have been easier for Avraham. This would have detracted from the reward Avraham would receive as well.**

2.

Talelei Oros pages 213-215

The Gemara in Rosh Hashana (32b) relates that the angels asked Hashem why isn't hallel said on Rosh Hashana? Hashem answered 'is it possible that when the book of life and death are open that you can sing a shira (song)?' The simple interpretation of this is; Hashem is deciding who will live and who will die. However, now we see that this could also mean that the books of the living and the books of the dead are open; meaning the dead are being judged as well. So the obvious question is; it's understandable that when the book of the living is open we shouldn't be sinning because we are being judged about whether we will live or die. What's the reason for not sinning because the book of the dead is open; if they are dead already then they've been judged? The Mishna in Avos (end of fifth perek) says whoever influences the masses to become meritorious shall not be the cause of sin etc. The merit of the masses was to his credit.

**Even after death, a person can be moving from level to another level, based on the actions they performed in this world! The amount of Torah that we leave over can elevate our neshamos (souls) after our death! On the other hand as well, sadly, we can be moved to a lower level based on terrible actions we executed while alive that are still having negative effects in the world. After one dies he can still have an effect on those who are still living either for good or bad. For example, if someone teaches people how to steal without getting caught, then even after he dies as long as people are applying the lessons he taught them then he is responsible and is receiving sins for every item that these people steal. So too, conversely, if a person taught Torah and affected people in a positive way, bringing them closer to Torah and mitzvos, then he is having a positive effect on the world even after this person dies.**

**This is analogous to the classic Domino effect.** Dominos are fascinating to watch. One of the most interesting aspects about dominoes is that by merely pushing one domino down many dominoes fall. Sometimes thousands of dominos fall down all because of one domino. The nimshal (lesson) is that we are capable of having a major effect on others. Sometimes we do not even realize the tremendous impact and effect that we have on others.

**This is additionally analogous to a person throwing a rock in the water; there will subsequently be many ripples in the water.**

**This is why the Gemara says even when tzaddikim are dead they are called alive, and additionally why our parsha is called Chayai Sarah. Since these tzaddikim and Sarah preformed so many Mitzvos and had such a positive ripple effect on this world; it's considered as if they are still alive!!**

3.

Talelei Oros page 389

Why do we specifically blow the shofer? Why don't we play a guitar instead? Rabbi Yonason Eibshetz (Yaaros Devash chalek beis derush hay) answers that **when one speaks, the words come out of one's mouth. The sound of the shofer comes from breath/wind which is rooted/sourced from the heart. Therefore we specifically blow the shofer because the sound is produced from the heart. Hashem wants our heart. Our hearts are very pure. The shofer is also pure.**

**We also blow the shofer because a ram's horn was used at the akada.**

4.

Otzros HaTorah page 178-180

Why do we specifically dip an apple in honey? The Rama (siman 583) writes that the custom on Rosh Hashana is to eat an apple with honey. (יש נוהגין לאכול תפוח מתוק בדבש (טור), ואומרים תתחדש עלינו.) **Why do we specifically eat an apple as opposed to other fruits?** The Maharil answers, **it's sweet.**

The question arises; there are other sweet fruits. Furthermore, there are fruits that are sweeter. Another reason why we have the apple is it's **based on kabala.**

Another reason explains the Ben Ish Chai, is as follows. **There are three different types of pleasure that we receive when we eat an apple. It has a nice appearance, it taste good and it smells nice. We eat apples in order that we will merit the following three things; children, life and parnassah.**

Another answer, explains the Zichron Yehuda, is based on the Gemara. The Gemara in Shabbos (88a) asks; why are the Jews compared to apples as stated in Shiur Hashirim (2)? **Just as regarding apples, the fruit precedes the leaves, so too, the Jews first said we will do, then we will listen. When we eat the apple we are essentially indirectly praising the Jews who accepted the Torah. Therefore specifically on Rosh Hashana we eat apples in order to strengthen our merits.**

**Why do we dip specifically in honey?** The Keren LeDovid explains because **the nature of honey is that anything that is submerged in honey turns into honey.** The Shulchan Aruch (yora daya siman 84) says that if something that isn't kosher fell into honey, after a certain amount of time the non-kosher item will turn into honey and will be permissible to consume. This is precisely what repentance does. **When we repent out of love our sins turn into merits** as stated in mesechas Yuma (86b). We will thus have a sweet year.

Another reason we have honey is the following. When we learn our bad middos will change into good middos. The Chafetz Chaim (first intro to Lekuti Halachos on Kodashim) elaborates on this point. **The Torah is sweeter than honey. The nature of honey is fascinatingly unique. Honey has the ability to transform whatever falls into the honey, into honey. Even if something assur (prohibited) such as a bug falls into honey, after a certain amount of time the honey will end up being permissible** as stated by the Tor and Aruch Hashulchan (Yora Daya siman 84). (This depends on the size of the bug and the amount of honey and the duration of time that the bug was submerged in the honey.) **The same applies regarding one who learns Torah; it turns his whole essence and being into honey, something beautiful and sweet. He ends up acting properly. One who diligently and properly learns Torah, even if his nature was originally bad, the Torah will purify, sanctify and transform him into a different person (in a good way). (The following statement of Rav Shach shtims (coincides) with this perfectly; (Rav Shach Speaks page 149) that Torah study is not just one of the 613 mitzvos; it is much more. The study of Torah transcends the other mitzvos in one aspect: it can remold the basic character of those who learn it. In a Yeshiva one does not study merely to fulfill the mitzvah of Torah study, but strives to become a ben Torah – to acquire a Torah personality, to become a mensch.)**

This is why we dip the apple and challah into honey on Rosh Hashana. Since Rosh Hashana is the beginning of the year, we strive to accomplish this via consuming items submerged in honey.