

Rosh Hashana as a Day of Judgment Sources

I. Mishna Rosh Hashana, Chapter 1:2

The world is judged at four periods in each year; on Passover, in respect to the growth of produce; on Atzeret, concerning the fruit of trees; on Rosh Hashana, when all human beings pass like lambs before God's throne, in order to be judged; as it is said (*Psalms* 33:15), "He who hath fashioned all their hearts, understands all their works;" and on the holiday, judgment is passed concerning the water.

II. Gemara Rosh Hashana 16a

With whose opinion does our Mishna agree? Not with that of R. Meir, nor with that of R. Yehuda, nor with that of R. Yossi, nor with that of R. Nathan, nor with the teaching of the following Boraitha: All are judged on New Year's Day, and the sentence is fixed on the Day of Atonement. So says R. Meir. R. Yehuda says all are judged on New Year's Day, but the sentence of each is confirmed each at its special time--at Passover for grain, at Pentecost for the fruit of trees, at Tabernacles for rain, and man is judged on New Year's Day, and his sentence is confirmed on the Day of Atonement. R. Yossi says man is judged every day, as it is written (*Job* 7:18): "Thou remember him every morning"; and R. Nathan holds man is judged at all times, as it is written (*ibid.*): "Thou try him at every moment."

III. Gemara Rosh Hashana 16b

R. Kruspedai said in the name of R. Yochanan: Three books are opened on New Year's Day: one for the utterly wicked, one for the wholly righteous, and one for the average class of people. The wholly righteous are at once inscribed, and life is decreed for them; the entirely wicked are at once inscribed, and destruction destined for them; the average class are held in the balance from New Year's Day till the Day of Atonement. If they prove themselves worthy they are inscribed for life, if not, they are inscribed for destruction. R. Abhin said: Whence this teaching? From the passage (*Psalms*, 69:29): "Let them be blotted out of the book of Life, and with the righteous let them not be inscribed." "Let them be blotted out from the book" refers to the book of the entirely wicked, "Life" refers to the book of the righteous and "with the righteous let them not be inscribed" refers to the book of the average class. R. Nachman Bar Yitzchak said: It is derived from here: "And if not, erase me now from Your book which You have written." (*Exodus* 32:32) . "Erase me now" refers to the book of the wicked, "From Your book" refers to the righteous, and "which You have written" refers to the average.

We have learned in a Boraitha: The school of Shammai said: There are three divisions of mankind at judgment day: the wholly righteous, the utterly wicked, and the average class. The wholly righteous are at once inscribed, and life is decreed for them; the utterly wicked are at once inscribed, and destined for *Gehenna*, as we read [*Daniel* 12:2]: "And many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The third class, the men between the former two, descend to *Gehenna*.

IV. Rambam Mishne Torah Hilchot Teshuva Chapter 3 (translation by I. M. O'Levy)

1) Each and every person has merits as well as sins. Somebody whose merits outnumber his sins is considered to be righteous, but somebody who has more sins than merits is a wicked person. Somebody who has equal amounts of merits and sins is an average person. Righteousness is when one's merits are more numerous than one's sins, and wickedness is when one's sins are more numerous. The whole world operates on this principle.

2) Somebody whose sins are more numerous than his merits will die because of his wickedness, as it is written, "...for the multitude of your iniquity". Similarly, a country which has a multitude of sins will be destroyed as a result, as it is written, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very serious, et cetera". In the same vein, if the sins of the entire world were more than its merits it will become corrupt as a result, as it is written, "And the Lord saw that the wickedness of Man was very great on the earth". This measuring system does not work on a one-for-one basis, as there are some merits which outweigh many sins, as it is written, "...because of him some good thing is found". On the other hand, there are some sins which outweigh many merits, as it is written, "Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good". Only God knows how to evaluate sins and merits in this respect.

3) Somebody who is casual about fulfilling mitzvot, regrets achieving merits, wants to know what he will gain from them and regrets having done them in the first place will lose everything and will have no merits at all, as it is written, "The righteousness of the righteous shall not save him on the day of his transgression", which is referring to someone who regrets earlier merits. Just as one's merits and sins are counted on the day of one's death, so also are they counted on New Year. Anyone who is found to be righteous will continue living, whereas anyone found to be wicked will have death decreed against him. An average person is held in suspense until the Day of Atonement - if he repented he will continue to live, but if not he will be decreed to die.

V. "Netana Tokef" Prayer (translation by Artscroll Rosh Hashana Machzor)

So now, the Kedushah prayer shall ascend to You, for You, our God, are King.

Let us now relate the power of this day's holiness, for it is awesome and frightening. On it Your Kingship will be exalted; Your throne will be firm with kindness and You will sit upon it in truth. It is true that You alone are the One Who judges, proves, knows, and bears witness; Who writes and seals, (counts and calculates); Who remembers all that was forgotten. You will open the Book of Chronicles - it will read itself, and everyone's signature is in it. The great shofar will be sounded and a still, thin sound will be heard. Angels will hasten, a trembling and terror will seize them - and they will say, 'Behold, it is the Day of Judgment, to muster the heavenly host for judgment!'- for they cannot be vindicated in Your eyes in judgment.

All mankind will pass before You like members of the flock. Like a shepherd pasturing his flock, making sheep pass under his staff, so shall You cause to pass,

count, calculate, and consider the soul of all the living; and You shall apportion the fixed needs of all Your creatures and inscribe their verdict.

On Rosh Hashanah will be inscribed and on Yom Kippur will be sealed how many will pass from the earth and how many will be created; who will live and who will die; who will die at his predestined time and who before his time; who by water and who by fire, who by sword, who by beast, who by famine, who by thirst, who by storm, who by plague, who by strangulation, and who by stoning. Who will rest and who will wander, who will live in harmony and who will be harried, who will enjoy tranquillity and who will suffer, who will be impoverished and who will be enriched, who will be degraded and who will be exalted.

But REPENTANCE, PRAYER and CHARITY Remove the Evil of the Decree!

For Your Name signifies Your praise: hard to anger and easy to appease, for You do not wish the death of one deserving death, but that he repent from his way and live. Until the day of his death You await him; if he repents You will accept him immediately.

It is true that You are their Creator and You know their inclination, for they are flesh and blood. A man's origin is from dust and his destiny is back to dust, at risk of his life he earns his bread; he is likened to a broken shard, withering grass, a fading flower, a passing shade, a dissipating cloud, a blowing wind, flying dust, and a fleeting dream.

But You are the King, the Living and Enduring God.

There is no set span to Your years and there is no end to the length of Your days. It is impossible to estimate the angelic chariots of Your glory and to elucidate Your Name's inscrutability. Your Name is worthy of You and You are worthy of Your Name, and You have included Your Name in our name.