

World in Judgement

Rabbi Reuven Mann

The holiday of Rosh HaShanah is ambivalent. It is a festive celebration, but a time of profound seriousness, as well. This is the time when the world was created and we commemorate that momentous event. Our national mission is to proclaim the principle of creation, not only to our fellow Jews but to the world at large.

The recognition that the world has a Master and that we are created beings should fill us with joy. However, there is another side to this coin. Creation implies that the world has a moral purpose and that we are not free to act as we please. We are obligated to behave according to the moral code revealed by Hashem at Mt. Sinai. Our task as individuals and as a nation is to bring the exalted ideals of Torah to fruition in the world.

Our Rosh HaShanah prayers are beautiful and unique. They are the most noble and unselfish compositions anyone could imagine. Our thoughts on this day are not preoccupied with personal concerns, however compelling they may be. On this day we are appealing for the continued existence of mankind. That is because Rosh Hashanah is a time of judgement not only for Jews but for all of Hashem's creations. He is looking to see if the world He established has sufficient merit to be worthy of "renewal."

His judgement relates to the individual, the state, and the entire world. We must be cognizant of the awesomeness of the moment. Given the tensions that abound in today's world, no prodding is necessary to bring home the dangers we face. Is it an accident, that as the day of Judgement arrives Congress will be voting to approve a deal with Iran which will promote her ambition to become a nuclear power? Given the enormous stakes of the Divine reckoning that is taking place, one may ask: "Can I, a puny, insignificant individual do any thing which would exert a positive effect on Hashem's judgement?"

The Rambam says that you can.

Every person is part of a community, and every state is part of the world. Hashem measures the good deeds of the person against the bad. This is not a simplistic process; as the quality as well as the quantity of one's actions are considered.

Only Hashem can determine the value of a positive deed or the odiousness of a negative one. Only Hashem can make the calculation which determines whether we are innocent or guilty. We are exhorted to be positive and to never despair. The judgement of Hashem is tempered with absolute mercy.

The Rambam urges us to increase at this time the good deeds in our spiritual portfolio. Doing so will be beneficial to ourselves and to others. He says that our attitude should be that every *Mitzvah* we perform can tilt the scales of judgement in our favor and this will automatically bring benefit to our country...and the world.

At this time, no one should regard himself as insignificant. We have the power to affect the Divine Judgement for good or for bad. May this be a year of moral and physical salvation for each one of us, for the Jewish People, for Eretz Yisrael and the world.

I would like to wish all of our friends a K'siva V'chasima tova. May you all be inscribed for a happy, healthy and spiritually rewarding new year.