

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Rosh Hashana 9 - 15

Week of 29 Tammuz - 6 Av 5759 / 13 - 19 July 1999
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Let Freedom Ring

"Proclaim liberty throughout the land and to all the inhabitants thereof."

To any patriotic student of American history this is familiar as the inscription on the Liberty Bell enshrined in Philadelphia's Independence Hall. But to anyone familiar with Chumash it is a passage (Vayikra 25:10) in which Jews are commanded to announce (with a shofar, not a bell) "dror" — freedom — for their Hebrew slaves when the "Yovel" (Jubilee) year arrives.

The etymological discussion of how dror connotes freedom offers a fascinating insight into the Torah's definition of the essence of freedom. The verb *dor* literally means to dwell. Freedom is therefore defined as a person's unrestrained ability to dwell wherever he wishes and to sell his wares in any land he chooses. A slave is bound to the area where his master requires his services, and the profits of his labor accrue to his master. In Yovel, these geographic and economic restrictions are lifted and he achieves true freedom.

Throughout the centuries we have seen totalitarian states enslaving their citizens not with the physical chains of bondage but with restrictions on their right to travel. The Jewish "refuseniks" in Communist Russia and the Jews today in Moslem states like Iran, Iraq and Syria are modern examples of people denied the right to emigrate to the land of their choice and are therefore virtual prisoners.

It may certainly be said to the credit of the democratic tradition of the United States that it has lived up to the message of freedom inscribed on its Liberty Bell by never restricting the freedom of travel of any of its law-abiding citizens. Israel, the only true democracy in the Middle East and the country where that message originated thousands of years ago, can proudly claim that same record of freedom.

Rosh Hashana 9b

Prepared by Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem, Israel

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The Four Freedoms

Four historical freedoms are mentioned by Rabbi Eliezer in connection with Rosh Hashana:

- On Rosh Hashana it was Divinely decreed that the long barren Sarah, Rachel and Chana would bear children.
- On Rosh Hashana Yosef was released from prison.
- On Rosh Hashana our ancestors in Egypt were released from their work as slaves.
- In the month of Rosh Hashana — Tishrei — the final redemption of our people will take place.

The source for all these freedoms is the shofar. Just as the sound of the shofar on Yom Kippur of the yovel year signals the freedom of Hebrew slaves, so does the shofar blast on Rosh Hashana every year signal freedom from the evil inclination which causes man to sin.

Freedom from the power of evil is the wellspring for all of the aforementioned four freedoms. Human bondage is not limited to chains. Physical handicaps, political oppression and economic dependence are all forms of bondage. It was only natural then that on Rosh Hashana, the day of freedom from sinful desire, three great women should be released from the physical handicap of childlessness. This pattern is repeated with the release from political oppression, expressed in Yosef's release from prison in which he was so unjustly incarcerated. It reaches national proportions when our ancestors are released on Rosh Hashana from the bonds of economic dependence on their Egyptian slavemasters.

But the ultimate national freedom is yet to come, and it too will be ushered in with the sound of the shofar. "And it shall come to pass on that day the great shofar will be blown" (Yishayahu 27:13). This is the sound of the shofar which will mark both the end of Israel's subjugation to other nations and human subjugation to the temptations of evil.

Rosh Hashana 11a-b

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