

Parsha Ponders

Rosh Hashanah | September 6, 2021 | 29 Elul 5781

The difference between trust in Hashem and complacency¹

אם תקטלני – לך אייחל, ואם תבקש לעווני – אברח ממך אליך

If you kill me, to you I will commence. If you seek out my sin, I will run away from you, to you²

Our Sages tell us³ the difference between the judgment of Rosh Hashanah and that of a secular court. People who have a court appearance for a capital crime will wear dark clothing, look disheveled, and fear for their life. They will be utterly stressed beyond belief. Rosh Hashanah, the day that Hashem judges the whole world, is different. Jews dress in fine, white clothing, and are cleanly groomed. What's the reason for this? We are confident that Hashem will perform a miracle and give us a positive judgement.

What makes us confident? The Brisker Rav suggested that the answer lies in a *piyut*, a liturgical poem, which matches the theme of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The narrator declares that if Hashem will seek out their sin, they will run away from Hashem. Where will they run? *Towards* Hashem. This is a glaring contradiction. When you run away from someone, you don't run towards them. Quite the opposite! How then can these two phrases, אברח ממך, and אליך, make sense⁴?

What is *bitachon*, trusting in Hashem? It only makes sense to apply *bitachon* when a person realizes they are in a difficult situation. When it is clear to them the danger they face, if they control themselves, they will be able to rely on Hashem that He will come to their aid. This is true *bitachon*. However, someone who doesn't even realize the situation they face, and simply sticks their head in the sand, thinking that "everything will work out", is lacking in *bitachon*. They're just fooling themselves.

The author of the *piyut* had this in mind. When we have reason to run, for we fear Hashem's judgement, then we are properly paying attention. What will save us from His judgement? Only Hashem. It is to Him that we have to run, but only after we have reason to run. On Rosh Hashanah we are confident that Hashem will perform a miracle for us. However, this confidence, or *bitachon*, is only possible if we realize the seriousness of the day. With this realization, we wear our fine clothes and are freshly groomed, as we await our court date with Hashem. He is both the Judge and the Jury, and He is on our side.

Kesiva VeChasima Tovah. May we all share in a sweet, healthy new year

¹ Based on [Shalal Rav Yamim Noraim – Rosh Hashanah, Bein Bitachon LeSha'anenus](#), relating a eulogy of [Rav Shach](#) of the [Brisker Rav](#)

² The *piyut Keser Malchus* § 38, by [Rav Shlomo ibn Gabirol](#), recited by some congregations on Yom Kippur

³ [Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah](#) 1:3

⁴ See also [Rambam](#) to [Rosh Hashanah](#) 4:7: לפי שהם ימי עבודה והכנעה ופחד ומורא מהשם ומברח ומנוס אליו