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[Home](#) > Rosh HaShanah - 047 Fear & Closeness of Rosh HaShanah

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How To Approach The Yamim Noraim (High Holy Days)

We will try here a little, with *siyata d'shmaya* [1], to think and to internalize the matters that will be explained here. First we will learn about this matter in a way that our minds can know it, and then we will attempt to internalize the matters in our heart. It is then up to each person here to try to act upon these matters in his own life.

The simple perspective we have towards the *Yomim Noraim* [2] is that they are “*Y'mei Din*”, days of judgment. There is Rosh HaShanah, then the Ten Days of Repentance, and then Yom Kippur, where we prepare for the *Yom HaDin* (the day of judgment).

There are generally two main ways how to view *Yomim Noraim*. One way to look at it is that they are days of “*din*” – judgment; Hashem judges all people, big or small, and even the angels are judged, for the entire Creation is being judged. Hashem judges the entire spectrum of each person – all of his deeds, words, feelings, thoughts, and desires. That is one aspect of how to view Rosh HaShanah: All people in Creation are judged, and each person is judged on an all-inclusive level.

Another way to look at Rosh HaShanah, though, is that it is the one day of the year where all Creations pass directly before Hashem, where we each come into close contact with Hashem. During the rest of the year, only *tzaddikim* [3] merit such an audience with Hashem, but for one time a year, every single person in the world, no matter level he is on, stands before the King. It is a merit given to each of us, whether one is one of the 36 greatest *tzaddikim* or where he is the lowest person in the world. During the rest of the year, where we *daven* three times a day, we also stand before Hashem, and we speak with Him. But on Rosh HaShanah, each person stands before Hashem, regardless of whether he comes to *shul* or not.

So it is the day of judgment, and it is also a time of great closeness with Hashem. These are the two root perspective towards Rosh HaShanah.

Knowing Vs. Feeling

But besides for knowing about these concepts, we need to really feel these concepts. It is one thing to *know* about this, but to *feel* it is a second step. It is possible that a person “knows” about these things, but he doesn't *feel* it at all; or he feels it only minimally.

If someone wants to feel that there is just *Yom HaDin* approaching, and he doesn't try to feel how these days are closeness with Hashem, this is only half the *avodah*. [4] These words we are explaining

here will have to be *felt* by us, because it will not be enough to 'know' them on an intellectual level.

The Fine Balance

There are some people who become very afraid during *Yamim Noraim*. They are aware that the *Yom HaDin* is coming, and they are so afraid from this that they have to take pills to calm down their anxiety. Others who hear about this might think that these people are on a very high spiritual level for being so afraid of the *Yamim Noraim*. But the truth is that if a person only feels fear during these days and he doesn't feel how these days are days of closeness to Hashem, it can lead to much fear and anxiety.

But if a person feels the trepidation of *Yom HaDin* and he also feels the closeness with Hashem during these days, his soul is connected to both aspects and he attains the proper balance, and he will be calmed. Our soul must feel both the fear of the *Yom HaDin* which is coming, where Hashem will judge each person, and our soul must also feel that it is standing before its Creator.

How can we begin to open our feelings towards this? The purpose of the words here is to explain how we can draw these matters to ourselves as closely and as practical as possible, in a way that can apply to all types of people, no matter what level they are on. After that, each person can progress from there, on his own level.

The First Part - Fearing The Judgment

All of us have gone through this year, where we each had pleasant days, as well as difficult days. We have all gone through something hard this year. A person should sit down to think of what has transpired to him this past year. You cannot remember every last detail of course, but just try to remember the general events that happened to you this year. We each went through pleasant experiences and we each went through difficult experiences. Is anyone afraid of going through such experiences again next year?

If one had an easy year with no hardships, he does not have to think about this. But if you did have a year with hardships, try to relive the experience in your mind and feel again what happened.

When you reflect about what you went through this year, you can remember both positive events of this year which brought pleasantness to you as well as difficult events - *tzaros* (ordeals). Each has his own; one kind of person had difficulties with finding a *shidduch*; another person has a child who is ill and he is waiting for his child's recovery; another person is in need of livelihood; and another person needs *nachas* from his children. Another person had difficulties in learning Torah, another person had challenges with working on their *middos*, and another person had a hard time with his *davening*.

Does anyone here feel that there were difficult things he went through this past year? If someone denies this, he didn't make this reflection well enough. Any person can reflect about this past year and find what the hardest part of this year was for him.

After thinking about it, now ask yourself: Do you want next year to return to that hardship? Or would you rather that next year should not have that difficulty?

Awakening Our Sense of "Yirah"

Let us explain the depth behind what we are saying here.

Our *sefarim hakedoshim* explain that it is hard to fear the *Yom HaDin*. Why can't we see it and feel it so easily? It is because we cannot see with our physical eyes the judgment that takes place. Our eyes

only see the physical; a person knows of the *Yom HaDin*, but he doesn't feel it. So in order to feel the *Yom HaDin*, we need to look at it no less than when we are afraid of something. If we cannot see that it is a *Yom HaDin*, and we have only read about it and we have heard about it, we do not relate it tangibly. If we cannot sense something, it is hard to feel it. We can know about it, but it is hard to feel it.

What is the way of how we can better feel it? We need to reflect into this past year and see what resulted from last year's *Yom HaDin*. We can all see last year's *Yom HaDin*. We did not see the actual *din*, but we saw what resulted from the *din*. We know very well what resulted, from this year and from previous years.

Thus, the suggested method of getting ourselves to feel the *Yom HaDin* is, that besides for reflecting into the very concept of *Yom HaDin*, one needs to have some kind of experience it, based on his own past feelings that relate to the *Yom HaDin*. We cannot create a new fear if we have never gone through a fear. Anything that we fear is based on a previous experience we have went through.

In order to feel *Yom HaDin*, we should use our own imagination and **relive** the feelings we already recognize. If we relate to it with a minimal kind of feeling that is not that intense, we do not awaken such a fear of the *Yom HaDin*. But if we can remember the very intense and painful things we went through this year, which we know are a result of last year's *Yom HaDin* – and then we can awaken a real feeling for the *Yom HaDin*, because those are feelings we recognize well. That helps us relate to a fear of the *Yom HaDin*.

Reliving The Feelings

First, we must know what is missing from our fear of the *Yom HaDin*, and how we can fill the void and reach true fear of the *Yom HaDin*.

When you remember the hardest thing you went through this year and you know you don't want to go through it again this coming year, you can awaken a degree of fear of the *Yom HaDin*. But it won't work if you just remember the event superficially and you don't try to relive it.

When a person learns a Gemara and he doesn't understand it, it doesn't take long for him to realize that he doesn't understand it. But when it comes to thinking about this year's hardships, most people have a hard time doing this. Why? What are we missing?

It is because people just think and remember about the past year, but they don't try to really relive in their minds the painful experiences that they encountered, because it's unpleasant to recall it. It is not enough to remember what happened this year; we need to re-enter the pain that we had this year. The mere memory isn't that painful. But if you go deeper into the memory (in terms of the soul, this uses the powers in the soul called '*shoimer*' and '*medameh*', where our memory is retained through the imagination), you relive the experience, and then you can feel the pain of what you went through.

Understandably, there will be those who will not want to do this, because it is unpleasant and it is fearful to relive those painful events. But if one doesn't relive the pain, his memory of the event will only be intellectual and a bit emotional, and it will not feel that painful, so it will not awaken that much fear. One has to enter the memory of it and relive the pain, which helps him feel the pain on an emotional level, as opposed to just being aware of it with his intellect and memory.

For example, if a person lost his father, does he remember what he felt like by the funeral? A person might remember the whole funeral and all its detail until the burial, but that doesn't necessarily mean he is reliving his pain. A person needs to return in his mind to that time and remember the exact pain

he felt. If a person watches a video of his father's funeral, what does he feel? Does he just remember it, or does he relive the experience? He relives it. His soul returns to the funeral.

Memory alone doesn't help us feel the experience on an emotional level. But if we relive it through vividly imagining, we return to the painful feeling of what we went through, and then we feel the pain again.

When you relive the pain, now ask yourself: What is the pain saying? What are we feeling deep down as we are in pain? The pain is really saying: "Hashem, save me from this. It is so hard for me! I can't take this! Have mercy on me! Just take this away from me!!" That is how a person cries out to Hashem when he is in pain.

Again, I must emphasize that the point of this is not simply to remember the events that happened to you this year, but to actually relive the experience in your mind and to feel the pain you felt then. Your fear will then be awakened, and you won't want it to happen again this year. This very method is also the same method that can be used for developing *yiras ha'onesh* (fear of punishment).

Just knowing about the *Yom HaDin* intellectually, through reading the words of Chazal about it, or through reading lofty ideas about it - which is certainly necessary to know and learn about - is not enough to make us feel an actual fear of the *Yom HaDin*. We need to be able to relate to it on a personal level and then we are affected. Reading about the *Yom HaDin* speaks to our intellect, but it doesn't speak to our emotions. *Yirah* (fear) is only felt in our emotions, not in our intellect. If the *yirah* remains only in our intellect and our emotions don't feel the *yirah*, then we don't feel any *yirah* towards the *Yom HaDin*.

There are more examples as well that we can bring, which can help us awaken *yirah* towards the *Yom HaDin*. For example, a person should try thinking about the scariest time in his life. To start, he should take a pen and paper and write down five scary experiences he went through in his life. Write down the most fearful experiences you ever had. Relive the fear, and that is how you can awaken *yirah*.

Yirah Vs. Passing Inspiration

The truth is that it is not so easy to awaken a fear for the *Yomim Noraim*. We are taught by the *baalei mussar* that a person knows very well that there is a *Yom HaDin*, but he doesn't feel it. It is not a feeling that comes on its own; it is an inner kind of fear which one needs to work hard to acquire. People think that a little bit of inspiration will be enough to transform their entire Rosh HaShanah, and that they don't need to awaken any fear.

I was once in a *shul* on Rosh HaShanah where the Rav was giving a *derasha* before *shofar*, and I heard a person there saying, "This *derasha* turned around my entire Rosh HaShanah!" There are either one of two possibilities that happened here. Either the words of the Rav's *derasha* were so deep that they penetrated straight into the deepest part of his heart and it transformed him entirely (in one moment), or, his entire Rosh HaShanah is so superficial that it can get 'turned around' and manipulated so easily. A few moments later this person might 'turn around' his Rosh HaShanah again, and again, and again....

If we are looking to be inspired superficially, this is easy. There are all kinds of ways to do this. But if we want true and genuine *yirah* which stays with us permanently, we need to enter our own souls.

We need to enter the deepest fear we know of from our own life. We cannot produce a new *yirah*. All we can do is enter the level of *yirah* we already know of from our own life and then deepen it. But we have to relive our own fear, and we can't come up with new fear.

Although people like to say that Rosh HaShanah is a time of which it is described, “Seek Hashem where He is found”, and “Call out to Him where He is close”, and that Rosh HaShanah is festive time and a time of joy, although this is all true, we must remember that it is also the *Yom HaDin*!

If one wants to prepare himself from the *Yom HaDin*, he should use the advice given here, or other kinds of advice which our Sages spoke about, which draws ourselves closer to a genuine fear of the *Yom HaDin*, as realistically as possible.

In Summary of Part One Of Preparing For Rosh HaShanah

In summary, we need to awaken *yirah* for the *Yom HaDin*, and we have laid down here two possible methods of working on this. One method is to awaken the most fearful thing that happened to you this past year, and realize that it was because of the most recent *Yom HaDin*. The alternative method we mentioned is to write down the five scariest things that happened to you in your life, and try to see which of these evokes the most fear. To emphasize, don't just remember the events; relive the experiences of the fear you had. Then realize that the *Yom HaDin* is what brought these fearful events to take place in your life.

All of this is part of the first part of preparing for the *Yom HaDin*, which is to have a sense of fear the approaching *Yom HaDin*.

The Second Part of Yamim Noraim: Feeling the Closeness with Hashem

Now we will explain the second part of how to approach the *Yomim Noraim*, which is: to feel the closeness that we can have to Hashem during these days.

In simple words, the purpose of creation is to become attached with Hashem (*d'veykus*) to have *kirvas Hashem* (closeness to Hashem). Becoming close to Hashem is described as Dovid HaMelech said, “*And as for me, closeness to Hashem is good.*” There are levels within levels of this closeness. Here we will only explain the roots of this matter.

We become attached with Hashem through doing the *mitzvos*, because this connects us to His will. Hashem commanded us to do certain deeds, and when we perform these deeds, we are doing His will. When we do the *mitzvos*, we are attached to His *ratzon* (will).

Another way of how we connect ourselves with Hashem is through learning the Torah, which is Hashem's *chochmah* (wisdom). Through this means, we are connected with the Creator.

A third means of how we connect ourselves to Hashem - which is the main *avodah* of *Yomim Noraim* - is when we feel, in the depths of our heart, Hashem's existence. It is to feel Him simply, and with palpable and clear awareness, where we feel Hashem in our heart.

Our *avodah* during the *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, and especially during Rosh HaShanah, is essentially to arrive at a palpable sense of Hashem's existence in our heart. Besides for the *avodah* explained earlier of awakening a fear of the *Yom HaDin*, we need to feel and sense in our heart that Hashem is with us, next to us, and that He can be revealed in our heart. Just as you can feel a friend standing next to you, so must you feel that Hashem is with you. This is called “*kirvat Hashem chushit*” - palpable closeness with Hashem.

Now we will think into this and how we can draw it closer to ourselves on a more practical level.

Firstly, any sensible person knows that this is not only an *avodah* for only Rosh HaShanah; its root begins on Rosh HaShanah, but it is meant for the entire year as well, because it is our entire life. We

need to get used to feeling Hashem's existence as a simple feeling.

Stage 1: Knowing That Hashem Exists

First we need to first know about this concept on an intellectual level, and then we need to internalize it in our heart as a feeling.

We need to know, clearly: Where is Hashem found? He is found every place. He is found in every time and in every soul as well. This fact must be carved very, very deeply into our minds: Hashem is found everywhere. To feel this palpably will be another step, but first, we must know it clearly.

You Are Never Alone

Therefore: Is there such a thing as a person ever being "alone"?

Last week when I left my home in Eretz Yisrael, I was saying goodbye to my children before I left. I told one of my older children: "You should know that you have two fathers. You have a father who lives in Eretz Yisrael, who is now going away, and you have a Father in Heaven. I am leaving Eretz Yisrael temporarily and I will not be here with you now, but you still have your Father in Heaven." This is an attitude with which to view life with. A person is always, constantly, with Hashem. If a person ever feels lonely - and many times, people indeed feel lonely - it is a sign that he does not feel that Hashem is next to him. He feels that he is alone.

The first step is that one must know clearly in his mind, that there is no such as being alone. We can be with a few people or we can be with a lot of people, we can be with no one else, but we are always found with Hashem. This is not just another fact to know about in life. It is the basis upon which all our life is built.

Each person needs to set aside time to think about Hashem's existence. When should he do this? Here is an example of when he can try it. When a person goes to sleep - what does he think about before he gets into bed? He is thinking about the day that transpired. When one does this, is he thinking, or is he imagining? (If he is 'thinking' about the day, he is on a high spiritual level.) Usually a person is experiencing his thoughts through memory, and memory is based upon imagination.

Instead, there are two kinds of proper thoughts that one can think about before he goes to sleep, generally speaking. Either he should think about the *sugya* of Gemara he learned that day, or, he should think that underneath his covers, there are two beings here: there is you, and there is Hashem.

Every night, a person can do this before he goes to sleep, and as soon as he pulls the cover over himself he says to himself, "*Ribono shel Olam*, I am not alone underneath my covers". He recognizes that there is another here besides for himself; he is not alone. Every night, one should go to sleep like this and think of this, for just a few minutes. If he can't do it for 5 minutes, he can try doing it for 2 minutes. If he can't do it for 2 minutes, he can try doing it for 1 minute, or 30 seconds - or even 1 second to just give some thought about this. The point is to train the soul into this feeling of Hashem's existence.

Many times we find ourselves alone. Sometimes we find ourselves in a country where we don't recognize anyone, and sometimes we are all alone in a room. What is going through the person's mind then? Is the person thinking, "I'm alone"? Any time you find yourself alone (this is not referring to extremely difficult situations where you feel very lonely), think to yourself that you are not alone. In fact, at times, you should deliberately go to a place where there are no people there (as long as it's not a dangerous place to be in), and tell yourself, "I am not alone. Hashem is with me." Go there on

purpose, and make sure you will be alone.

You should think about this not just 1000 times and not just 10,000 times – but much more than that. This might sound like an exaggeration. But you can think about it 10 times a day, 20 times a day, 30 times a day, and you thereby train your soul to get used to it. It is a thought which must fill our entire mind. It is another fact of life to know about in life. It is the very essence of life.

Hashem originally placed Adam in Gan Eden. When he sinned, he ran into hiding. Hashem called out to Adam, “Where are you?” Adam was afraid and ashamed, so he hid. Ever since then, man has been in “hiding” from Hashem; he feels ashamed from Hashem. Before the sin, man lived with G-d and felt His presence clearly, and there was no sense of separation between man and G-d. Man knew that Hashem is always next to Him, at all times.

Man knew that even Gehinnom wouldn't separate him from G-d. If a Jew ever goes to Gehinnom, *rachamana litzlan*, what should he do? If a person is told that there is a decree of Gehinnom on him for the next 40 years, what should he do? Hashem should help each of us that none of us should ever go to Gehinnom - but if a Jew does have to go there, he should know that Hashem is still with him![\[5\]](#) And then he will feel that he is in Gan Eden, even in Gehinnom.

The thought that we are never alone, for Hashem is always with us, is a thought that must envelope our entire mind and heart.

How Do We Become Closer To Hashem and Feel His Existence?

Let's think about the following simple point.

Let's say a person lived a generally good year this year: he learned Torah, he did mitzvos, he davened, he did *chessed*, he got along with others, etc. But if he did not talk to Hashem enough during the year (at least three times a day), and now Rosh HaShanah is approaching, will he suddenly sense a closeness with Hashem?

Even though he keeps hearing in all the speeches and in all the *sefarim* that Rosh HaShanah is a time of more closeness with Hashem, that it is the time of “*Seek Hashem, where He is found*”, he will find that he still doesn't feel any closeness. He tries looking around in *sefarim*, in order to feel closer to Hashem.

I remember that when I was a *bochur*, and *Aseres Y'mei Teshuvah* was approaching, I began looking through *sefarim* so that I could feel something. I kept reading, reading, and reading. I realized that the only thing I “felt” was that I felt nothing!

So I thought to myself, it must be that I need to keep reading more *sefarim*, and then finally I will feel something. It came Rosh HaShanah, and I tried concentrating very deeply throughout the day in order to feel something, but I found that I could not concentrate on it as I would have liked to.

I thought to myself, “It would be so much better if I was Sephardic. That way I can wrap myself in a *tallis* even as a *bochur*, and then I would be able to concentrate even better.” Being that I was not Sephardic, all I had was my hat and jacket, and I wished I could wear a *tallis* so that I could wrap my head in it and concentrate better. But what was the real answer? It is because the heart was not there.

A person goes about his routine during the year and then suddenly he sees that on the calendar, it will soon be Rosh HaShanah. He has to make peace with what it says on the calendar....but his heart is not with him.

Baruch Hashem, he hears an inspiring lecture and he is told that he must feel close to Hashem. He knows that he needs to, but he is not *there*. If he is not there, he will not be able to suddenly feel during *Yomim Noraim* that he is *there*, when his soul is not already connected to there. By contrast, if a person's entire year is spent with feeling a closeness to Hashem, his feelings during *Yomim Noraim* deepen, and he becomes even closer to Hashem.

But if a person doesn't feel any closeness to Hashem during the rest of the year, when it comes *Yomim Noraim* he might know that he is supposed to feel something, but he doesn't actually feel, and it just pains him that he doesn't feel.

Feeling close to Hashem is not something you can suddenly jump into in a moment. Compare this to a person coming in middle of a 2-hour *shiur* on the Gemara when there are 5 minutes left to the *shiur*, and he sits down to the Gemara and quickly asks the Rav, "I don't understand something here." It's not that he didn't 'understand' - he has never heard anything to begin with, because you can't suddenly grasp an entire *shiur* when you came at the last 5 minutes of the *shiur*.

If a person lives throughout the year in which he tries to be close to Hashem, the days of *Yomim Noraim* serve to deepen that closeness he already feels and he receives greater clarity of those feelings. He is already connected to that closeness. But if the rest of the year is not spent on trying to become close to Hashem, a person does not feel it suddenly when it comes *Yomim Noraim*.

Today it is the 24th of Elul. If a person today decides that he wants to feel closer to Hashem during these days, what should he do? He should begin today, *now*, a kind of life where he can feel Hashem regularly. It should become his normal routine of life. One must enter into a life which is all about a deep bond in our heart with Hashem.

There are people who think a lot about *hashgacha peratis* (Divine Providence), which is wonderful, but they don't realize that Hashem is next to them! Hashem is guiding this world from Heaven, but the knowledge of this alone doesn't enable a person to feel Hashem next to him. Of course a person should know about *hashgacha peratis*, and it is a part of our *avodah*, but he must be aware that this is only part of one's *avodah*; there is far more.

Even if a person feels that Hashem loves him, this doesn't mean he feels that Hashem is always with him and next to him. Love doesn't always mean a sense of togetherness. For example, right now I am in America, and my children are in Eretz Yisrael. Do I love my children? Yes. Am I together with them right now? No. So too, it's possible that a person feels that he has a Father in heaven, Hashem, and that he is His child; but he still doesn't always feel that Hashem is next to him and that He is with him at this very moment.

The Ten Days of Repentance, and Rosh HaShanah, are not just days where Hashem is watching over us with *hashgachah peratis*, although that is certainly true that He is; and these are not just days of mercy, which is also true. These are not just days where Hashem loves us as His children. It is even more than this. It is a time where a person can feel simply that Hashem is with him.

First one must know this clearly, and then he should verbalize it with his mouth, again and again.

The Importance of Talking To Hashem

When Yosef HaTzaddik had to descend to Egypt, the Sages say that "the Name of Heaven was on his lips." This doesn't mean that a person always says "*Baruch Hashem*." That would be the name of Hashem on his lips alone, but it doesn't show that it's on his heart. It means that a person expresses what is in his heart; "*piv v'libo shavin*", that his mouth and heart are in line with each other. A person

speaks with Hashem every day, three times, in prayer. The *Kuzari* says that when a person is earnest in his prayer, as soon as he ends his prayer he is looking forward to the next prayer. When he finishes *Shacharis*, he is looking forward to *Mincha*. What should he do in between *Shacharis* and *Mincha*? Should he just wait? He can speak with Hashem between *Shacharis* and *Mincha*!

This does not mean that he should daven another *tefillas Shemoneh Esrei* again. Just talk simply to Hashem in between all the prayers. Getting used to this will feel like trying to learn a new language, which is very difficult to learn. So what should a person do when he has a hard time getting used to this new 'language' of talking to Hashem? If a person is learning about a certain language and he is not understanding it, what should he do? He should try again and ask Hashem to help him understand!

There is a kind of life where a person lives with Hashem throughout the day. **This is not a hard avodah at all to do. It is all a matter of habit and getting used to it.** The *avodah* we spoke of earlier, *yirah*, is a much more difficult *avodah* than what we are describing here. What we are speaking about now is entirely a matter of habit - it is not an "*avodah*". A person should get used to thinking many times throughout the day that he is not alone, and he thinks about this every night before he goes to sleep, and whenever he finds himself alone he thinks about this, and he sets aside time each day to be alone and he thinks about this and he talks to Hashem about this. But along with this, one needs to also speak to Hashem throughout the entire day and get used to this. Understandably, he should not look like an insane person when he does this. But the point is that he should just get used to talking with Hashem. This should become the way his life looks: he is not alone, for he always has Someone next to him.

We can compare this to a person who gets married and he is in his first marriage. They told him before his wedding that he will have to spend the night at home instead of being in the *beis midrash* at night, because there is a mitzvah to make one's wife happy in the first year of marriage. So he's in his house every night with his wife for 3 hours. What does he do during all this time with her? Does he talk to her, or does he not talk to her? What should he talk about with her? Should he open up the *sefarim* and tell her the ideas there? (Should he speak only Torah with her? If he does this he might end up bringing her into the Koleh!)

What should he speak about with her? He should only speak about what interests her? He must firstly speak with her about what interests her, but if he only speaks with her about what interests her and never about what interests him, this is a level only for *tzaddikim*. Reb Ben Tzion Abba Shaul zt"l did this, but this level is not for the average person. One needs to speak with his wife both about what interests her as well as what interests him.

Now let's think about how a person should talk to Hashem. What does a person talk about with Hashem? Some people take a pen and paper before Rosh HaShanah and write down everything they will ask Hashem for, so that they don't miss a single detail and so that all their requests will be answered.... I am not saying not to do this, but we must know that talking to Hashem means to speak with Him about what you feel. When you live with someone, you talk to the other about what you feel. So too, when you live with Hashem, you talk to Him. If a person only prepares his requests of Hashem and that is all he will talk about with Hashem on Rosh HaShanah, it is a sign that he doesn't feel that He lives with him.

This way of life is a kind of life that transforms the entire person. One who tries this for a few months will see that he has transformed into an entirely different person; this is tried and tested.

The Balance Between Learning Torah and Talking To Hashem

However, sometimes when a person begins to talk to Hashem, he becomes enmeshed in their personal requests of Hashem, such as success in learning Torah. The person asks of Hashem for help in understanding Tosafos, because that is what they are in middle of right now.

On one hand, our intellect must be immersed in Torah learning, and one must learn the Gemara with clarity and with review, making sure that he knows his learning. But our Sages teach us: "There is a time for Torah and a time for prayer." Torah without prayer is not Torah, and prayer without Torah is not prayer. One must be immersed in learning Torah, day and night, but a person also has to set aside time every day to talk to Hashem.

Some ask, "How can we do both? Either a person learns Torah, or he talks to Hashem - but there is no time for both." But just like a person is able to see and talk at the same time, so can a person do these two things at once. It is possible for a person to learn Torah as well as work on his closeness to Hashem.

We must caution that all that we have said thus far, about developing a relationship with Hashem and talking to Him each day, is a matter which must not compromise on the time one spends on his Torah learning. We are emphasizing this point because when one is ignorant of this, it has caused many a downfall.

One must be very careful that his relationship with Hashem is not taking its toll on his Torah learning and causing him to slacken off from learning. If one's intense bond with Hashem is weakening his Torah learning, it is a sign that something is wrong with his own bond with Hashem and it is incomplete. One must have a deep bond with Hashem and with learning his Torah. (In addition, one must also have a deep love for every Jew, although we did not address this point here.)

In Summary and In Conclusion

To conclude, let us summarize this discussion. We explained two parts of preparing for the *Yom HaDin*. The first part is to awaken a *yirah* of the *Yom HaDin*, and the second part is to feel a bond with Hashem; to feel that He is with you, always.

We explained that in order to gain *yirah*, one should awaken his painful memories of this past year and relive the experiences. Then you can feel what it means to have *yirah*. A person needs to do this when he has quiet and when is alone, and feel this *yirah*.

The second part is to awaken one's bond with Hashem. First one must review clearly in his mind that Hashem is everywhere. Whenever you find yourself alone remind yourself that Hashem is with you. In addition, talk to Hashem throughout the day. Regarding this point, the *Mesillas Yeshtarim* says that one can talk to Hashem "as a man talks to a friend".

May we merit to approach the *Yom HaDin* with both of these parts - *yirah* and *kirvas Hashem* - and through this may we merit the *siyata d'shmaya* to be written for a good year, in the book of the righteous, and all of *Klal Yisrael*. Amen, and Amen.

[1] Heavenly assistance

[2] The "high holy days" of the year, which begin in the month of Elul and includes Rosh HaShanah,

The 10 Days of Repentance, and Yom Kippur (and Sukkos)

[3] the righteous

[4] avodah - inner work or task

[5] In sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh (Vol I.), the Rav quoted this in the name of Rav Shach zt”l

Source: <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/rosh-hashanah-047-fear-closeness-rosh-hashanah>