



The Weekly Parsha Shiur of Maran, Rosh HaYeshiva, the righteous Kabbalist,

Our Rabbi Benayahu Yissachar Shmueli Shlit"a

An excerpt for Parsha of Shoftim 5786 (2026)

The Ants Reveal the Secret

Now we are already in **Parshat Shoftim** [the Torah portion of Shoftim]. At the end of this week's portion, Parshat Shoftim, [is] the law of **Egla Arufa** [the decapitated heifer]: that if a slain person was found on the road and it is not known who killed him, it is necessary to take a heifer that has not been worked to a hard [unworked] river-bed, and there they break the back of the neck of the heifer [with a hatchet]. And it is written that it will be forbidden to sow anymore in the place where the neck of the heifer was broken. And one must understand the secret of the matter—what is the point in breaking the neck of the heifer here?

The Holy Zohar says: The soul of the murdered person did not depart by the Angel of Death, because his time to die had not arrived, but rather what happened? Some person came and murdered him—took out his soul. Therefore, the Angel of Death comes and cries out before the Holy One, Blessed be He: "He robbed me! I was supposed to take the soul of the slain person!" And so he prosecutes and accuses and searches for someone to kill him. What to do? Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says, they give him an exchange/substitution, and then he stops his prosecution, and the exchange is the *Egla Arufa* [decapitated heifer]. And this is like on Yom Kippur when they send to the "Sitra Achra" [Other Side / evil inclination] the scapegoat to Azazel.

And what happens after they break the neck of the heifer? **Targum Yonatan ben Uzziel says**, that immediately afterward a swarm of ants comes out of this heifer, and they go and go all the way to the house of that murderer. And thus the court catches him and judges him. And this is what is written at the end of the portion: *"You shall purge the innocent blood."*

The Meron Disaster - On Rosh Hashanah

Now we are standing at the threshold of the month of Elul, the month of mercy, [and] this month is preparation for the Great and Awesome Day of Judgment. **Every Jew knows** that what happened on Simchat Torah, and what took place in the Meron disaster—it didn't happen on Simchat Torah and it didn't happen on Lag BaOmer, but rather it was already determined on 1st of Tishrei—on Rosh Hashanah. The same thing with **COVID**, [it] didn't break out in Adar, in Shevat, no! **It broke out on Rosh Hashanah**; the Holy One, Blessed be He, had already determined then what would happen during the year.

When there was the subway train disaster in London where hundreds of people were trapped and all of them "went poof" [perished]—died inside the train, [and] there was a big mess [over] what happened, then **Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz** said that these people were not trapped in the month of Tevet, Shevat, but rather they were already trapped in the net on Rosh Hashanah.

This is **like a person who goes to catch fish**: he goes to the sea, spreads a net, and puts in it all kinds of bait—lures, and they enter inside, and they enjoy the food, all night they sit there eating, drinking, **making a party, all the fish...** happy... But they don't know that in another moment they will lift them up. And when they lift them up, one of the fish says: "What bad foresight! Had we left one moment earlier, all this wouldn't have happened to us," but they don't know that already from the beginning of the night, 12 hours ago, [the net] caught them... What 'one moment'...?

1st of Tishrei, that is the date on which everything is determined! What will be, who will live, who will die, who by sword, who by strangulation, who will go into captivity. Here, we hear how many troubles, may it not be upon you or me: here, **some singer on Erev Shabbat (Friday)** went to bring food, and suddenly his car crushed him; **and young children drowning**, disasters, problems—**all this was determined on Rosh Hashanah**.

You know, before Rosh Hashanah a person plans what to do in the coming year; he says, let's say, at Chanuka he is getting married, he books a hall, he determines all kinds of things. But really it is impossible to know what will be, my dear! May it be that everyone has satisfaction; the greatest joy in the world is the existence of the world, one must plead that everyone will have the very best in the world. **But**

the advice—the helpful advice so that it will be a good year—is now, in the month of Elul, to prepare ourselves, because how we behave is what determines! With Hashem's help, we will believe that everything will be fine, surely!

We Saw What Happened in 5781 and in 5784

And we need to know that this year, Rosh Hashanah is not like every year. In the majority of years, Rosh Hashanah does not fall on Shabbat, but this year Rosh Hashanah will fall on Shabbat. And it will be like this next year as well—Rosh Hashanah 5788—it will also fall on Shabbat.

This is not a simple matter at all that Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, because in such a situation there is no **Shofar sounding** on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. Our Rabbis prohibited [it] to us so that people would not come to carry the shofar and desecrate Shabbat. **And see what happened to us:** in the last 15 years, when did Rosh Hashanah fall on Shabbat? **In the year 5781**—and in that year was the Meron disaster. **And also in the year 5784**—in that year was the disaster of Simchat Torah near Gaza, may it not be upon you or me, what they did, May Hashem help us. [On Simchat Torah here with us Yoav, he ran straight in. That was something terrible and awful, who would believe such a thing?] Now come and see what this means.

A Funeral Is Not Laughing Matter

And what is the significance of Rosh Hashanah on Shabbat? **The Gemara says in Tractate Rosh Hashanah** (page 16b): **Rabbi Yitzchak said, any year in which they do not sound [the shofar] for it at its beginning—they blast [alarm blasts] for it at its end.** If they do not sound [it] at the beginning of the year, then afterward during the year there are troubles, "they blast for it at its end," meaning that one needs to blow trumpets of supplications in the middle of the year. If we had done it at the beginning, if a person had wept at the beginning, he would not need to cry afterward.

It is told that there was a town that the border split into two, separating the residents from the Jewish cemetery. The Jews turned to the authorities and requested that they allow funerals to cross the border with the deceased without being delayed through customs, and the authorities gave permission for funerals to cross to the cemetery.

And there were merchants of pearls, precious stones, and gold who thought to exploit the opportunity and transfer across the border without paying tax. **What did they do?** All the gold and pearls they wanted to transfer, they placed inside a corpse's coffin, and the merchants held the coffin on their shoulders, saying "He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of

the Almighty" as if someone had passed away there. And thus they crossed the border without paying customs.

One day, a new commander arrived at the border, and behold, he sees a funeral where all the people have neckties... and he is amazed and wonders to himself: "Usually at a funeral everyone is crying, and these look happy... wearing ties... each one looks like a lord... behind him is a Mercedes with a driver, 'He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High'—and they are laughing."

The commander said: "This is not normal, why are they laughing at a funeral? There is something suspicious here!" Immediately he stopped them for inspection... and commanded to open the coffin... Immediately all the merchants began to cry: "Sir, this is a dead person! Respect for the deceased!..." He opened the coffin and the truth was revealed... treasures upon treasures... and **they cry and cry**. The commander said to them: "**Stupid fools!** Now you are crying? It is too late! If you had cried before you reached the border and not laughed, I wouldn't have checked. But because you didn't cry, to cry now—it is already too late!.." So it is with Rosh Hashanah: it is time **to cry** and repent! For [otherwise] people are liable to cry in the middle of the year.

Why Did the Sages Do This?

Our Rabbis said: The Early Authorities [Rishonim] are like angels—the Rashba says there that what the Gemara says, that "they blast for it at its end," this is only when they did not blow at its beginning out **of negligence [willful wrongdoing]**, but when they did not blow because Rosh Hashanah fell on Shabbat, about this it was not said, because this prevention is a commandment for the sake of Heaven, since our Rabbis forbade [it] to us so that people would not come to carry the shofar and desecrate Shabbat. **And Tosafot, Halachot Gedolot, and the Tur** say that even if they did not blow due to coercion [beyond their control], it is a problem.

But one must understand: **how did our Rabbis abolish the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah that falls on Shabbat?** After all, who will defend us when there is no shofar? Who will confuse Satan? The **Chatam Sofer** says: when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, the attribute of Strict Justice is sweetened and perfumed by the holiness of Shabbat; therefore, the Sages were able to say that there is no blowing of the shofar.

And what is the matter of sweetening? He says, that indeed on Shabbat as well, the Holy One, Blessed be He, sits and judges the world, but on Shabbat the Holy One, Blessed be He, does not issue a verdict for bad from His mouth, but rather speaks the good side—does not say "so-and-so will die," but says "so-and-so will live until such-and-such day," brings forth good things, "will be healthy until such-

and-such day," "will be rich until such-and-such day," and from the good speech of the Holy One, Blessed be He, the angel can turn [it] for good.

The same thing when they asked **the Ben Ish Chai** in *Torah Lishmah*: what will happen without shofar blowing on Shabbat? He said to them, that on Shabbat the rectification is done on its own, **what did the Ben Chai do?** He set that all the intentions (*kavanot*) that the Holy Zohar brings, to say them, and this is like the blowing of the shofar, this is a very great thing. We also arranged this in the prayer book; it is good that a person study it before Rosh Hashanah — it will be good for him.

May Trouble Not Arise Twice

The *Aruch LaNer* adds that the Shabbat is the mate of Israel, and she is an advocate on our behalf before the King, the King over kings, the Holy One, Blessed be He; and the Shabbat goes out and comes before...the Throne of Glory: "*Between Me and the children of Israel it is a sign forever,*" and by virtue of Israel observing the Shabbat properly, the Holy One, Blessed be He, forgives their sins. "He who guards Shabbat from desecrating it (*mechallelo*)" — do not read it as *mechallelo* [from desecrating it], but rather ***machul lo*** [he is forgiven].

But if, Heaven forbid, they desecrate the Shabbat, the Shabbat becomes a prosecutor. Therefore, one must distance [oneself] from desecration of Shabbat, especially in years when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat. Let us strengthen ourselves in repentance without pause, for who knows the outcome of the year—whether good or bad; so, he writes. And we already said: any year in which they do not sound [the shofar] at its beginning, they blast for it at its end; therefore, let a person not treat this lightly. And then he says that it will be the finest year possible, the moment we strengthen ourselves in Shabbat.

Therefore, I said that now that we are beginning the month of Elul, let us start with this, so that we know that this year and also next year Rosh Hashanah will fall on Shabbat; after all, we saw what happened in 5781 and in 5784, woe and alas, "may trouble not arise twice."

Came to Bless and Found Cursing...

There is a parable about this, very piercing! **A certain minister** sinned in his service before the king, hid certain matters, and the king was extremely angry with him, [and] said to the judges: "Punish him with full severity, how is he not ashamed? He sat at my side, and he does such a thing?" The minister tried to bring great lawyers, but each one said to him: "Listen, the king is angry with you, such an iniquity—it is impossible to deal with it, I am afraid to even approach to be your

lawyer." Thus, all the lawyers were afraid, no one wanted to approach out of fear, [and] he remained without a lawyer, not knowing what to do.

He came home weeping. His wife said to him: "What happened? Why are you weeping so much?" He told her. His wife said to him: "Am I not a seamstress for the king's clothes? I am their nanny, I go to the king, I speak with him, every moment I enter, I come, I arrange [things], I will plead for you."

Well, she approached the king, began to weep, that if her husband is punished, her children will remain orphans, and she will be a widow, and what will be their future, and this is a good father for the children, "I am ashamed of what he did, but I am begging." The king thought and decided to rule him innocent by merit of the wife.

After several months, another minister did a deed that should not be done, and he said: "Look, my friend's wife pleaded with the king and succeeded in saving him, I too will send my wife to plead with the king." And indeed, she too came, weeping: "Save my husband!" And the king says to her: "I see you have scratches on your face, where is this from?" "You cannot lift your hand, what happened?" The king's servants said: "Do you know what beatings her husband gives her? These are the marks of the beatings." And the king says: "For a villain like this you come to ask for mercy? Now I will bring down his judgement in the strictest way, his verdict is that he be executed" — and stiffens his judgment.

And the application of the parable is clear: Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat. Who protects the People of Israel? The Shabbat is our Queen. If a person honors the Shabbat, the Shabbat goes to be an advocate: "See how he honors me," the king says, "good, for your sake we will save him." But if a person beats [desecrates] the Shabbat, does not honor [it], then where will she go, to be an advocate? Woe and alas, this is a great problem.

The Blind Man Stood in the Synagogue to Everyone's Astonishment

A person who merits to guard his eyes, to guard this [sight], he puts gates of protection for them. And one of the protective measures for the eyes is not to take a bribe, as the Torah also says in this week's portion, "*For bribery blinds the eyes of the wise.*"

There is a wondrous incident that happened in the generation of the Gaon Rabbi Bezalel Ashkenazi, author of *Shita Mekubetzet*. At that same time, there lived in Egypt the Gaon **Rabbi Chaim Kafusi**; the people of his generation dubbed him "Ba'al HaNes" [Master of the Miracle]. Why did they nickname him so? **Because an incident occurred as follows:** Rabbi Chaim was a veteran judge (*dayan*) and one of the greatest of the generation. **One day, Rabbi Chaim went**

blind unexpectedly. Immediately, wicked men rose up whispering, accusing him of taking a bribe—[saying] that bribery blinds the eyes of the wise.

Since he heard that they were saying about him that he took a bribe, he stood up in the synagogue and proclaimed before the entire congregation, that if there is truth in the words of his opponents, he shall remain blind forever; but if not, he prays that his eyes will be illuminated as before. **And immediately a miracle occurred and his eyes were illuminated, and from then on they called him "Ba'al HaNes."** **And the Chida testifies:** "I, the young one, saw his signature when he was blind [called by euphemism, full of light/sight], and he was signing by estimation, and almost no letters were recognizable because he did not see; and I saw his signature afterward, when R' Chaim Kafusi, received the miracles of Hashem and then they were written properly."