

“What Are You Doing for Rosh Hashanah?”

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September 3, 2023



Here's one of the hot topics that floats around in Breslov women's circles this time of year: "What are you doing for Rosh Hashanah?" At least, I hear it a lot.

Forget about what I'm doing (which is my own story); let's just consider some possibilities...

a) You are married, with or without children, with or without family nearby, and your husband does not travel to Uman for whatever reason—perhaps just not this year, perhaps never. So your Rosh Hashanah is probably going to look a lot like that of your friends and neighbors—you spend whatever time you can in prayer either in synagogue or at home; feed the children (if there are children) pretty much non-stop;

hear the *shofar*; eat festive meals; either do or do not receive guests. As a woman who is connected with Rebbe Nachman in some way or another, what makes your Rosh Hashanah uniquely Breslov?

Rebbe Nachman said that his entire *inyan*—his whole focus, his very essence even—is Rosh Hashanah. “*Gohr mein zach is Rosh Hashanah.*” He was clear that it is extremely important to be with him for Rosh Hashanah. But what if, for whatever reason, we are neither there ourselves nor sending ambassadors?

Some suggestions: prepare a *pidyon* (soul-redemption charity money) to be given before Rosh Hashanah to a *tzaddik* on your behalf; participate in the midday worldwide recitation of *Tikkun Haklali* the day before Rosh Hashanah; learn something of Rebbe Nachman and Reb Nosson’s teachings about Rosh Hashanah and the blowing of *shofar* for inspiration (make use of Breslov Research Institute’s great resources in English if you cannot follow the original writings)...

Try to be with the *kibbutz* in Uman in your mind and heart (and this also applies to us who are sending ambassadors). Rebbe Nachman taught (as did the Baal Shem Tov, the Ramban and others) that you are where your thoughts are. If your thoughts and heart are with the *kibbutz*, then you’re also there.

“If only I had the wings of a dove, I would fly away to the holy tziun in Uman!”

That said, it’s still important to be happy where you are, to focus on the good points of your family and community and not allow yearning to fall into self-pity and melancholy, which is the worst sin. “...Delight in G-d is your strength!”

For all Jews everywhere, the main focus on Rosh Hashanah is accepting and proclaiming Hashem’s Kingship. Try to keep your mind on this, and be careful with your speech on the day of judgment. If you will be spending time with non-Breslovers, it is a great *avodah* not to enter into disagreements about 1) why

your husband has left; 2) why it is important to go to the Rebbe; 3) anything at all.

b) You are at home or staying with family or friends, and you've sent an ambassador (or more than one) to Uman. Be happy! What a privilege! Instead of focusing on the fact that you've been left behind (actually, you haven't—one's wife is like himself, and a person's emissary is an extension of himself), bear in mind that you are bound to the *kibbutz* through all of the efforts that you have expended to make it possible for your emissaries to get there. If you are spending the festival with non-Breslovers, do not allow this to bring you down. You will be praying or at least hearing *shofar* with kosher Jews who are doing their best, and Hashem's presence is drawn to wherever He is called upon in truth, and certainly where there is a kosher *minyan*. Of course, everything that applies to a) above in terms of being connected with the *kibbutz* also applies here.

c) You will be with the *kibbutz* in either Jerusalem or Meron... How fortunate you are! Every bit of self-sacrifice to be with the *kibbutz* either on your own or with family is certainly worthwhile. Be uplifted by the Breslover atmosphere and be grateful that you have the opportunity to applaud when the congregation reaches "*HaMelech!*"—when the first great declaration of Hashem's Kingship is made. (You can still buy seats in the women's section in Jerusalem, and there is always room for more in Meron.)

d) You have already left or will be leaving shortly for Uman yourself. More and more women are going, and although I have my own feelings about it which I won't go into right now, it seems to be a trend that is only growing. What can I say? That I'm a bit envious and also that I'm not straining against the current constraints that keep me from joining you. But that's me... As for you, *ashrayich*. Fortunate are you. May all your *tefilllos* be answered for the good, and may you merit to receive a dose of the *da'as*, the mindset and holy awareness of

Rabbeinu. And may you successfully navigate through Uman in a modest and unassuming manner.

For me, the main thing on Rosh Hashanah is to keep my head, my *rosh*, in the right place. I try to think only good thoughts; spend as much time in prayer as I can both in and out of *shul*; pray with a *minyan* of G-dfearing Jews; watch my speech; realize to whatever extent it is possible for a simple person like myself the infinite greatness of the Creator—and my infinitesimal smallness and dependence on Him. With all this, I try hard not to neglect my younger children or get frustrated by my inability to spend all day in *shul*; to serve delicious meals to the family and whatever guests Hashem sends; and to develop faith in Hashem's mercy—so that I can celebrate the festival of the new year.

Rabbeinu said that for his people, he manages to accomplish in the heavenly judgments on the eve of Rosh Hashanah what othertzaddikim only manage to accomplish on Rosh Hashanah itself. Part of my relationship with my Rebbe is confidence in the truth of his words. I must repent with all my heart and also trust in Hashem's forgiveness and lovingkindness.

A gut gebetnsched yohr! Wishing everyone a good and blessed year!