

Rosh Hashanah Teaching: The Dynamics of Relationship - Panim and Achorayim

Introduction: Foundation and Beginning

We're going to try and remain grounded and kind of convey clarified simple ideas that rest at the core of any other idea would say. But the goal is to really walk away with something practical and a new insight into how to approach these days. And so at the end, I'm going to also save time for questions or clarifications or anything like that, but I will try and maintain it.

You know, everything that's set on the highest levels is true on the lowest levels, but that also means that anything that's set on the lower levels also contains everything that's going to be set on the higher levels. So while a person can build a four floor home and then build a thousand floors on top of it, you can spend all your time in the 1000th floor. Nevertheless, the thousandth floor has nothing that the first floors don't have. Everything is built upon the beginning and the foundation, any extension is just building upon, but not changing. So starting at the beginning is really the safest way because when you're at the beginning, you're getting everything anyway. There's a danger when you try and start at the end because you think you have something and then you kind of forget about the value of the beginning. So the beginning of the year, the beginning of insight, beginning of ideas. So we should be zocheh (זוכה) to have our hearts open up a little bit.

The Theme: Creation Narrative and Adam HaRishon

The theme that I want to talk about is a theme that is based upon creation narrative in Bereishit (בראשית), especially with regards to the creation of Adam HaRishon (אדם הראשון) and Chava (חווה), in particular the emergence of Chava from within Adam HaRishon and the beginnings of the dynamics of relationship of relating to something other than the self.

And this is a theme that finds its way into the Zohar HaKadosh (זוהר הקדוש), which takes that which is written in the Torah and expands it and reveals kind of the unconscious motivations and the drives of spirituality that are underneath the narrative. And then it gets taken from the Zohar HaKadosh and placed into the Arizal's (האר"י) writings, where it becomes an actual mechanism to understand what's happening. And then in Chassidut (חסידות) and the GRA (הגר"א) and the Ramchal (הרמח"ל) and all of the future generations of interpretation, it's an interpretation of those basic principles. But we'll start with the first principles.

The Two Categories: Panim and Achorayim

Reality and self are split into two categories. There's the face panim (פנים) and there's the back achorayim (אחוריים), the back side of things.

Now the face panim (פנים) represents a connection to the essential thing, a real direct connection to the most important thing to the truth and the real reality of what's taking place. While achorayim (אחוריים), which is the hither side of things, the back side of things represents the awareness of where I want to connect myself to the awareness that there's something I want to be attached to, but I'm not experiencing it.

In a panim el panim (פנים אל פנים) type of relationship, it's a face to face encounter, but rather I am experiencing it by way of the hither side, by way of a distance. Achorayim (אחוריים) means that I'm encountering the backside of something, which tells me that there's a front side, there is a face, but that face is not accessible to my eyesight. I can extrapolate, I can assume that if I see the back, there must be a front, but it doesn't mean that I actually have access to the front.

The Experience of Panim

When a person has a relationship, panim el panim (פנים אל פנים), to the face of something, it means that I know what the purpose is, I know what role I play in this point of encounter, and I'm connected. When I see a person's face, nothing is hidden. The face reveals - I know what mood a person is in when I read their face. I know that I could interpret - I never know, but I could interpret by way of empathic joining what that person's face must be saying about their emotions. But it's not shrouded in confusion. The panim (פנים), when something is revealed and at face value, there's a direct connection. There's no cloudiness.

The Experience of Achorayim

Achorayim (אחוריים), on the other hand, is cloudiness. It's trying to come to something by way of secondhand information, not arriving at the scene, but trying to climb my way back up to some memory of something that I know must be here, but I don't really know what it is I'm looking for. And I don't know if I'm getting it right. And again, this metaphor of panim (פנים) and achor (אחור) can extend itself in any type of relationship, in any type of metaphor. But for our purposes, panim (פנים) means direct encounter, which does not leave me questioning what I'm encountering. It doesn't put me in a place of skepticism or doubt, needing to kind of recuperate some imagined form of certainty. The face is certainty itself. I don't have to ask what is the face telling me - I could behold the face of something, the panim (פנים) of something. This is what we're always searching for, the Panim of Hashem (פני השם) and the achorayim (אחוריים) is the opposite. It's where it's clouded. It's translated already. Something was here and now it's lost, and I have to kind of recuperate someplace.

The Spiritual Framework: Pnimiyut and Chitzoniyyut

So Hashem explains to us, and the Torah teaches us that the entirety of existence is split into these two elements. There's a pnimiyut (פנימיות) to the world, the inner kernel of insight that I'm trying to attach myself to. The light of Hashem, the light of goodness, the light of faith, the light of grace, the light of warmth and chesed (חסד). Then there's the achorayim (אחוריים), which is always associated with chitzoniyyut (חיצוניות), which is din (דין), which is constriction, which is measure, which is congealment that blocks the mind's eye from the front. So we're always grappling with these two orientation points. We want to get to the face, but we very often find ourselves stuck in the backside of things.

Gendered Terminology and Archetypal Patterns

To go with one or two more metaphors, not to get lost in kind of the... You can take a million metaphors, but the main metaphors that I want to use for this is that Adam (אדם), Adam HaRishon represents the Panim (פנים). It represents something that's clarified.

And I want to make a clear point before I go into Adam-Chava. When Kabbalah (קבלה) uses gendered terminology to determine particular experiences in life, right? Masculine and feminine becomes a really important lens in which we experience things. We're not talking about the actual gendered orientation of an individual, right? We're not talking about biology. We're talking about modalities of thinking, archetypal patterns of thinking. So when the Arizal discusses zakhar (זכר) and nekevah (נקבה), he's talking about two different modalities of experience that exist within each and every person. So when I'm talking about masculine tendencies, it is by no means meant to be limited to the male species and degrading of the feminine quality. And when I talk about the ascendancy of femininity, it's not meant to diminish masculinity. Human experience is ultimately about coming to a place of the unity of these two opposing parts within ourselves and making peace between them. So when we're going into a gendered conversation, we're not talking about kind of the sex of an individual. We're talking about archetypal ways of functioning.

Masculine and Feminine Modalities

Pnimityut (פנימיות). The panim (פנים) is expressive. It reveals something to me. The panim (פנים) tells me. It tells me a story. Now, the face itself should hold us hostage. When I see the face of another person, that's enough of a story. But the panim (פנים) reveals to me what I'm trying to get. It's expressing something to me, I'm receiving it. The masculine impulse is always to reveal something from above to below, without concealment, without constriction. Masculinity, the light that comes from above to below, goes Aleph to Bet, to Gimel to Dalet. It's a very clear sequential process of cause and effect.

And the opposite is true when it comes to Achorayim (אחוריים), which is going to be considered feminine in relationship to the Panim (פנים). Now, femininity, if masculinity is this expressive drive to reveal clarity from above to below, without constriction, to make something very clear, then achorayim (אחוריים) is the different approach. It's constrictive, it's limited, it's measured, it only offers drops at a time. It doesn't reveal the entirety of the picture. If it reveals one piece, another two pieces are concealed in front of the person.

You know, Panim el Panim (פנים אל פנים) is I see a piece of land and I say, this is where I'm going to build my palace. I see it in my mind. Achorayim (אחוריים) is like Sherlock Holmes when he shows up at a crime scene and he has to try and extrapolate from what's missing, what exactly took place here. If Panim (פנים) is Aleph to Bet, to Gimel to Dalet, when I'm at Aleph, I know I have to go to Bet. When I'm at Bet, I know I have to get to Gimel. That's a face experience. I see things as they are. Backside is Tav to Shin, to Reish, to Kuf, I have to work my way back up from within concealment itself. I have to climb out of constriction, not because I know that there's a Shin that waits ahead of me once I unplug out of this Tav type of experience. But I trust that it's there and I'll dig deep enough to get there and then I'll come to find it. I never know what the next step is. I'm just digging and trying to return back panim (פנים). Things are clarified.

The Desire for Direct Revelation

So we would imagine. We would imagine that we want to experience Panim al Panim (פנים אל פנים) in this world, right? We want to experience life in a way of pnimityut (פנימיות). We want to see that which is hidden. We want to see the truth. We want to know exactly what it is that I need to do, expressed most intensely just in what the main desire of what people want is. What should I do? You tell me what to do. And I'm not saying, people are asking me this, but this is what people did when they were nevi'im (נביאים). You would go to the navi (נביא), you would behold the face of the navi (נביא), and it became clear exactly what you needed to do. It wasn't left in the into questioning. I didn't have to question my purpose or my presence. I just knew what I needed to do without complication. It's simple. If I see revelation, I know how to act in a revealed way.

But Achorayim (אחוריים), on the other hand, is trying to retrieve some purpose from within. An echo. I don't know. No one's going to tell me what I need to do. They're just going to give me the tools needed to pave further along on my path. But it's a very different type of human experience. So we figure we want panim (פנים), we want to know what the neighbor thinks, we want to know what others think of us. We don't want to walk around with anxiety, right? We don't want to be left questioning. We want the direct exposure to the light of God, to the light of other, to the light of clarity. And achorayim (אחוריים) would seem to be the opposite. Stuck in concealment, not knowing, always questioning, wondering, worrying. All of the tendencies and the modalities that we're so familiar with.

The Primary Relationship: Kudsha Brich Hu and Shechinta

So the Arizal tells us a very, very interesting process, a very interesting thing, that there's two points to any relationship. Life is relational. As human beings, we relate to God. And the greatest thing that we can do to mimic our relationship with God is to relate to other people. That because God wants to have a relationship, so to say, the clearest place in which we experience our true humanity is in our relationships. How we relate to myself, how I relate to God, how I relate to others, how I relate to my loved ones, how I relate to my enemies,

how I relate to my teachers. Everything is relational. The main form of relationship is between Klal Yisrael (כלל ישראל) and HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא), everybody with me so far.

Now each and every Jew is Klal Yisroel (כלל ישראל). Each and every person, a person who saves the life of one Jew. It's as if they've saved the entirety of the Jewish people, right? So the main relationship is the relationship between me and Hashem. I am relating to Hashem. That is the place of relationship. We call this, or the Sefarim (ספרים) call this, or the Tzadikim (צדיקים) call this the relationship between Kudsha Brich Hu (קודשא בריך הוא) and Shechinta (שכינתא).

Klal Yisroel (כלל ישראל) represents the Shechina (שכינה), the reason we take our feelings seriously. The reason we trust our intuition, the reason we value our thoughts, the reason we value our feelings is not because we're human beings, but because we have a spark of the Shechina (שכינה) within us. That the Jewish heart is the resting place of the Shechina (שכינה), so to say. And so the Shechina (שכינה) is the divine presence that rests hidden within human consciousness and the human entanglements of emotions. That's the Shechina (שכינה). That's the awareness that God exists somewhere hidden in this concealed place. Kudsha Brich Hu (קודשא בריך הוא) is the revelation of Hashem. That's where we know that's the Hashem that gives us the Torah. That's the Hashem that reveals himself to Moshe Rabbeinu (משה רבינו). That's the Hashem of Shabbos. That's the Hashem of redemption. Kudsha Brich Hu (קודשא בריך הוא) is clarity, fundamental clarity. I know what it is. It's Hashem's transcendence. He's everything, he's everywhere. And there's really nothing to ask. All concealment makes sense in the face of the illumination of Hashem's transcendental light.

But from the perspective of Malchut (מלכות), us, our experiences, our emotions, our psyches, the developmental patterns through which each and every one of us kind of emerge in this world. That's the story of Malchut (מלכות). That's the story of the Shechina (שכינה). That's the story of what it means to be a soul in a body. And so there's a relationship between Kudsha Brich Hu (קודשא בריך הוא) and Shechinta (שכינתא), between Hashem and between Klal Yisrael (כלל ישראל). Everybody with me on this.

The Configuration of Ze'ir Anpin and Malchut

Now, just for the sake of kind of clarifying, we are speaking in very down to earth language, but it's important to show what the language leads to. These two phrases, Kudsha Brich Hu v'Shechinta (קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתא), the relationship of Hashem and us, or us and Hashem, the primary relationship. Because ultimately, when I'm relating to my child, I'm also relating between the part of Hashem in me and the part of Hashem in my child. And so too with my spouse and so too with my friends. So really the only relationship that exists is that between the self and God. But it's whether I'm willing to... Like the end of Les Mis tells us to see the face of God and the face of the other person.

So this relationship between Kudsha Brich Hu v'Shechinta (קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתא) us and God is referred to just in the language of the Arizal as based in the Zohar Kadosh (זוהר קדוש) as two configurations that are always in relationship with one another. One is called Ze'ir Anpin (זעיר אנפין), the small countenance that represents the face. It's a face. It's fully reflective of what it represents. It's a whole story. It reveals itself in clarity. That's HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא). And then there's malchut (מלכות), which is destitution, emptiness, something that is a very tiny dot that doesn't yet know its experience.

These two elements, Ze'ir Anpin (זעיר אנפין) and Malchut (מלכות), which represent Kudsha Brich Hu (קודשא בריך הוא), which is Ze'ir Anpin (זעיר אנפין), and malchut (מלכות), which is the Jewish people, also are reflected in the primordial relationship between Adam and Chava. Because, like we said, the masculine tendency reflects that overflow of presence which we're going to associate now with Kudsha Brich Hu (קודשא בריך הוא) and Ze'ir Anpin (זעיר אנפין) and malchut (מלכות). Chava represents that position of concealment and modesty and silence, which corresponds to malchut (מלכות) and corresponds to Shechinta (שכינתא).

So we have really three alignments, which are ultimately three stages of the same idea. We have Ze'ir Anpin (זעיר אנפין) and Malchut (מלכות), Kudsha Brich Hu v'Shechinta (קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתא), and Adam and Chava. That's the relationship. And ultimately it's us and Hashem.

Rosh Hashanah: The Renewal of Relationship

When it comes time to Rosh Hashanah, what's happening is that there's a resetting of the relationship, which is the death throes of the year, which is why we get really serious. Because when a person realizes, oh, wow, the year is dying. So that's when we wake up and we're like, okay, let me try and figure out what to do. And we're all accidental murderers because we've all killed the dreams that we've accepted upon ourselves the last Rosh Hashanah. And that's why the Arizal tells us that Elul (אלול) is Roshei Tevot Ani L'Dodi v'Dodi Li (ראשי תיבות אני לדודי ודודי לי) that there will be a place called the Ir Miklat (עיר מקלט) that is reserved for accidental murderers to run and take refuge. This placeless place of urgency where, when I realized the year is done, okay, I gotta realize, okay, the relationship didn't go the way I thought it was going to go. But I gotta prepare myself for the incoming year because I really want that relationship to work.

The Tzadikim (צדיקים) always said that we say, the eyes of HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא) are on the land of Israel. Mei'reishit HaShanah v'ad acharit shanah (מראשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה) - someone who spent a lot of time talking about this idea. Why do we see that in the davening (דיוונען) for the beginning of the year, we say HaShanah (השנה) as opposed to the end of the year, where we just reflect and say shanah (שנה), because, ha, the hey ha'yedi'ah (הא הידיעה) represents the idea that this, this, this is the one, this is the year. Because at the outset of every Rosh Hashanah, we say, this is going to be the year. This is going to be the time where the relationship takes fruition, where there's a connection, where I come to really experience the light of God in my life, and I'm confident in my best self on Rosh Hashanah, in that newness. So it's HaShanah (השנה). But then as the end of the year kind of gets to where it's going, we typically find ourselves saying, wow, I didn't do it. It's not my fault that I didn't do. It was a crazy year every year. But this, you know, and so we say shanah (שנה), it's just another ordinary year.

But that awareness of, oh, it's just another ordinary year is when we run to the Ir Miklat (עיר מקלט), we run to the Ir Miklat (עיר מקלט), where we say, Hashem, I killed a lot of my dreams and promises this year. I'll say Kol Nidrei (כל נדרי). And I said, Kol Nidrei (כל נדרי), but I still tried to make promises. And so Elul (אלול) is like the grappling with the death of the previous year, kind of coming to terms with the fact that, you know, Hashem, I got to do teshuvah (תשובה). And Rosh Hashanah is a rekindling of the relationship. And with that, all relationships, just as when the Yam Suf (ים סוף) split, all water split everywhere, so too the renewal of the relationship. And Rosh Hashanah is the renewal of every fiber of relationship in a person's life across the spectrum.

The Initial State: Achor b'Achor

And so the Arizal gives us an amazing narrative, an amazing tale, an amazing sippur (סיפור) of what's happening in this type of relationship. So now let's go back to any questions so far. Everybody with me? So let's go back now to those terms that we spoke about before in terms of panim (פנים) and achorayim (אחוריים), the backside and the face.

Hashem wants there to be a cultivation of a relationship with Klal Yisroel (כלל ישראל). But he understands also that to throw Klal Yisroel (כלל ישראל) into an expectation of a relationship right away is a crazy thing, because Hashem doesn't throw us into this world and say, hey, this is a perfect world. Find me here. Because that wouldn't be fair, because it's not a perfect world. And it would be impossible to find him. What HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא) does for us, and this is one of the most redemptive elements of what Yiddishkeit (יידישקייט) does, every ounce of Torah explains this, is that it's not a perfect world. And therefore the relationship that you're going to cultivate with me is going to be one of nuance and process and development and shifts and changes and ratzo v'shov (רצו ושוב) and running and returning and touching and not touching and opening and closing. And Hashem gives us that right. That's not like, oh, you guys couldn't do it the right way. Here, secondarily you can try and figure out how to do it. No, Hashem knows we can't do it the right way. There is no right way. So we're cultivating our relationship.

So when the human being is born into existence, we're vulnerable. We're too exposed to severity, we're too exposed to constriction, we're too exposed to concealment. And left to our own devices, we would be swallowed up. We wouldn't be able to make it. We are by far the most dependent creature on Earth. If you ever watch nature videos, sometimes there's certain creatures that the moment they're born, their parent is trying to eat them and the kid is already dependent in the womb. Sharks are already ultra predators in the womb. There's no such thing as dependency. But the human being is by far the most dependent creature. We remain dependent our entire lives. This dependency. Hashem sees that there's going to be a vulnerable stage. And for that reason, Hashem gave us these two parts, a panim (פנים) and an achorayim (אחוריים).

Because the panim (פנים) is so direct and it sees exactly what is what. A stage of panim (פנים), a face to face encounter. With Hashem in this world, with experience in this world, I don't have to be worried about falling off my game. Nobody, when they're in a moment of devekut (דבקות), nobody's saying like, oh, I'm gonna mess up, I might be thinking, oh, this is gonna end. But when a person feels connection with their loved one, with their friend, with their parents, with God, with a teacher, with a text, with a moment, it's unquestionable. The panim (פנים) need not explain itself. It's felt. It's felt fundamentally, intuitively.

Now, can I explain what that panim (פנים) experience is to me? No. It's a foolish thing to even try. A There's shiv'im panim laTorah (שבעים פנים לתורה), and that's for each and every person. But to explain the panim (פנים) is to use the wrong language in trying to convey experience. I can't tell you what it is. You can look at how I describe it to myself. But panim (פנים) is individualized for each and every person, and there's no need for protection against concealment when I see eye to eye.

But the achorayim (אחוריים), part of ourselves, that less developed part of ourselves, that place that's much more caught up within anxiety and doubt and much more influenced by our microsystems and our macro systems and the traumas of our experiences and collective traumas that impacts the that place of dinim (דינים), that place of constriction. Because while there's a part of human experience that wants Panim (פנים) and understands that this world is a beautiful garden and all I need to do is attune my mind to God, there's also a part of the self that says, how in the world am I going to survive this day? And how in the world am I going to make it for another minute because of this, that, or the other thing, each person in accordance with their own understanding. And that's the dinim (דינים) in a person's life. There's the chasadim (חסדים), the Panim (פנים), where everything is illuminated, and there's also the gevurot (גבורות) in my life, that feminine quality of constriction which doesn't know it's a vessel, it could be broken. It's wanting, it's waiting, it's yearning for something. And yearning is very powerful. But it also very quickly can become transformed into thirst, and thirst can be transformed into craving and craving. We know where it takes.

And so the two parts of the self, and. And again, the self was not meant to be unified. If the self was meant to be unified, the self would have been created unified. If God wanted Malachim (מלאכים), he wouldn't have created human beings. The fact that we're human means that we go through cycles, right? Like a donkey, we have. Like an onion, we have layers, that. There's layers, there's stages, there's different experiences. This is what Hashem wants from us. It's not b'di'avad (בדיעבד), it's l'chatchilah (לכתחילה). Hashem wants the avodah (עבודה) of kritzut chomer (קרצות חומר) from those of us who are stuck down here in this world.

And so the human is meant to contain within themselves Panim (פנים) and achorayim (אחוריים), Kudsha Brich Hu (קודש בריך הוא) and Shechinta (שכינתא), both parts of myself. Hashem doesn't just want me to show up after 120 and say, Hashem, I served you when you were revealed to me in those panim (פנים) moments. I had you. And guess what? I found this new way to manufacture panim (פנים) experiences, and I was able to do it over and over. That's not what Hashem wants. That's going back to the chet (חטא) of the Etz HaDa'at (עץ הדעת). What Hashem wants is our panim (פנים) and our achorayim (אחוריים). Hashem wants the moments of connection, and he also wants those moments of connection that are forged within apparent concealment.

And so Hashem says, I want the human being to have both of these elements so that they can learn how to unify them together. But the chitzoniyut (חיצוניות) of the Adam, the achorayim (אחוריים) of the Adam, that feminine quality of the Adam, that, that because it's so severe, because it's willing to understand the severity of human experience, something Malachim (מלאכים) can't understand, it's able to understand death and

concealment and struggle. It's vulnerable, it's susceptible. Because if you have an exposed and open mind that's willing to look at reality without this kind of whitewashing or magical thinking to say, no, everything is fine, well, then, when we experience dinim (דינים), yeah, we might have some element of a shock absorber, but if the din (דין) goes a little bit too much and I don't have the capacity and I experience a somewhat of a trauma in reaction to those dinim (דינים), then the achorayim (אחוריים) can become blemished.

And this is what the Arizal and the Zohar Kadosh (זוהר קדוש) spend so much time talking about. When the chitzonim (חיצונים) attach themselves to the achorayim (אחוריים), that kelipah (קליפה), that externalities in this world and things that appear to be insignificant, things that the notion of something being insignificant if thought about long enough, can lead one to heresy. If I live in this world with the conception that there's something extra and that does not have an exact purpose in this velt (וועלט) that could lead. That string of thought can lead one to heresy. And so has to be very, very delicate. Because, yeah, it's willing to be exposed to the harshness of reality, but exposed to too much harshness of reality. Like, that's too much. That's a little bit too much. There was a famous poet who wasn't necessarily a lover of the Jews, but, you know, forget him. But his words are good. T.S. Eliot said that human beings can't tolerate very much reality, right? The achorayim (אחוריים) are there to receive, but it has to be protected, right? We have to be born into a certain form of illusion. Everybody with me.

The Developmental Process: Illusion to Disillusionment

So Hashem wanted to ensure that at the outset of creation we wouldn't be exposed to reality and say, oh, my God, what is this? I can't do it. We might come to that conclusion. It's a hard place, but at the beginning, we can't be exposed to that. And so in the beginning, Hashem wants us to have an illusion of omnipotence, just like any child in the developmental stages when a child is born. So they don't know the correlation between them crying out and getting fed or them crying out and getting changed. Because they don't understand the differentiation of bodies and minds yet they have no spatial or temporal quadrants. So there's a state of omnipotence. The child believes that it is the center of existence. And because it conjures up in its mind body this undefined need for food, it gets fed immediately. That's the illusion of omnipotence that every child has to enter into.

Then as the child develops, and we're all children, and this is true for the neshamah (נשמה) as well, there needs to be a necessary stage of disillusionment. The child has to be slowly but gently showed that you are in fact, not the center of the universe. And the reason that you're getting fed is not because you thought it, sweetheart. It's because your mother heard you or your father heard you, or the ideal kind of role model, whatever. You can't just say father, mother, but that's the model. But whoever it was, and the child, if it can tolerate the fact that, oh, I don't get fed immediately because maybe there's other things going on, or maybe I don't need to, and it understands that when I need mom, dad shows up. But when sometimes I don't need, I'm left to my own self. The child is disillusioned from omnipotence and it comes to accept the reality of a good enough parent. Not a perfect parent who's always there at any moment that I demand, but a good enough parent that is there when I need and also teaches me how to enable the sense of distance.

If a child is unable of going through this separation between illusion and disillusionment, and it expects that perfect parent because it continues to remain omnipotent in its expression expectations in this world. So then what happens is instead of seeing a good enough parent, that sometimes there, sometimes not there, it begins to split. It creates an initial act of splitting which severs these two parents. It says, the mom or the dad that's there is the good parent. And when they're not there, it's the bad parent and rachmana litzlan (רחמנא ליצלן) to kind of then develop into the world with this tendency of splitting of this. It's a profoundly present cognitive distortion that affects nearly everybody's life. Where we split reality into good and bad, which we know is obviously heretical. But in the beginning there has to be illusion.

And so in the beginning, in order to protect the delicate nature of the human experience, the relationship between Adam and Chava, between man and woman, between Kudsha Brich Hu (קודשא בריך הוא) and Shechinta

(שכינתא) was achor b'achor (אחור באחור). It was back to back. As the Zohar Kadosh (זוהר קדוש) and the Midrash (מדרש) spend a lot of time in the Gemara (גמרא) and Berachot (ברכות) discusses how was Adam born? It was du partzufim (דו פרצופים) that the original kind of human being was born like a Janus-faced figure sharing a back of one face facing that way and one face facing that way and ultimately being this dependent creature.

Why? The Arizal says because the achorayim (אחוריים) need to be protected. At this early nation state of the emergent year where chaos is unfolded, the achorayim (אחוריים) can't be exposed. The vulnerable part of the self can't be exposed. My awareness of how distant I could actually feel from God or how low I might feel at moments, I can't be aware of that at the beginning. Why would I pick up for another year? So I have to momentarily hide myself and enter into an illusionary state where I don't have to worry about the achorayim (אחוריים). Why? Because they're protected. My achorayim (אחוריים) are not vulnerable because they're protected. The chitzonim (חיצונים) reality has no access point there.

That's the initial stage of the relationship where Adam and Chava are built back to back so as to ensure that the vulnerabilities of the backside and their exposure are not going to become nullified and despondent in that stage, in that stage of relationship. If we're the nekevah (נקבה), right, because we're relating to HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא) in a back to back stage of relationship, it is an a state of utter dependency. I receive from the other, I take from the other directly. There's no separation, there's no distinction, there's no distortion. It is a complete saturation of relationship to the degree that there is no distance whatsoever. The possibility of the distance is an impossibility. It's pure and utter attachment. In spite of the fact that this attachment is an immature and infantile state of attachments because it's still a back to back form of dependency on the other, or what we might come to term later on as the various grades of codependency of just being dependent fundamentally on the other. So as to protect me, everybody with me in that stage, we're protected, we're protected, but we're also dependent.

The Problem of Codependency: Lechem Kishufah

And the Ramchal (הרמח"ל) really, and the Leshem (הלשם) in a different way, and the Ba'al Shem Tov (בעל שם טוב) in a different way. And there'll be many shiurim (שיעורים) to discuss each and every one of the particular paths. But all of the tzadikim (צדיקים) in general and the Ramchal (הרמח"ל) really took this as, you know, what he felt one of the elements of his gilui (גילוי) had to be was that this relationship is the opposite of the purpose of creation. Because the purpose of creation is for us to receive goodness from Hashem, to receive, to be in a receiving relationship that can really behold the ultimate goodness that God wants to send down our way. Kudsha Brich Hu (קדושא בריך הוא) is perpetually overflowing with light and transcendence and goodness. There's no bad that comes down from heaven. Everything at its core is ein od milvado (אין עוד מלבדו).

But if we were to receive that by force, by way of compulsion, simply because I'm tethered to that and I have no ability to make a choice on my own, I just receive whatever Kudsha Brich Hu (קדושא בריך הוא) is sending down. So I'm going to be a little bit ashamed. There's going to be a certain discomfort in my capacity to receive that goodness because I know that it's infantile and I know that I never actually had the chance to earn this on my own. And yes, in that stage I'm protected, my achorayim (אחוריים) are protected. I'm eating from my mother directly. I'm not going to be lacking, but I am lacking deficiency. I'm lacking the territory of freedom to develop from within my own self, within my own vulnerabilities, and to actually do some of the work on my own. And so this achor b'achor (אחור באחור) relationship is an infantile stage where we're receiving fundamental effulgence and light and mochin (מוחין) and shefa (שפע) and goodness and enoughness. But it isn't earned. It's a nehama d'kisufa (נהמה דכיסופא). It's a bread of shame that I can't really look the giver in the face, primarily because I haven't put in any effort into the relationship.

And so in that stage of achor b'achor (אחור באחור) Hashem is perpetually sending down illumination. The illumination is always coming down into the world. Goodness is always coming down into the world. But when it's that infantile relationship, so the one who is in charge is receiving all of that influx, all of that light, all of that wisdom, and it gives the leftovers to the immature Malchut (מלכות). Because Malchut (מלכות) can't handle

herself on her own. We're too vulnerable, we're too tzarich rachamim (צריך רחמים). And therefore I'll receive these extras that come down. So the Mochin (מוחין) come down, consciousness comes down, divine connectivity comes down. But the main expressivity goes to Kudsha Brich Hu (קודשא בריך הוא) goes to that masculine impulse of Panim (פנים). And the Achorayim (אחוריים) receives kind of the leftovers. It's the smallness of the moon, the diminution of the moon, which feels that it can't receive more than these crumbs and these leftovers. But again, it's a dependent relationship and it works. So I'll take what I can get. This is at its core, the impulse at the core of codependency, that because I'm getting what I need, so I'm not going to change anything.

The Process of the Nasira: Surgical Separation

But Rosh Hashanah is about ensuring that we cultivate a real relationship with Hashem and that we go through this ma'avar (מעבר), we go through this stage of disillusionment, a necessary stage of disillusionment, of being severed from that back to back relationship of pure dependency. And we come to a place of independence, because once we come to a place of independence and we can sever ourselves from our codependent connection to the source. So even though that's a terrifying process, because Malchut (מלכות) is going to be left on its own and it's going to feel destitute. Not only that, but it's cutting itself off from its source. And it's going to say, where am I going to get my mochin (מוחין) from if I'm severing myself? Not to mention the vulnerability that we're now exposed to.

This surgical removal of Malchut (מלכות) from the backside of Ze'ir Anpin (זעיר אנפין) of us, from the backside of HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא), where this is this compulsory way of relating to God, because I can't do anything but think about God, because I'll die otherwise. And there's a severing that takes place that leaves Malchut (מלכות) vulnerable, or apparently vulnerable and on her own in a state of concealment. A time where Malchut (מלכות) is concealed, where Malchut (מלכות) is no longer operating as this full sided back to back counterpart, but rather it's operating just like a tiny dot that hibernates back into its most modest and irreducible part of itself, which is the basis. And Malchut (מלכות) is left. Malchut (מלכות) is destitute. Malchut (מלכות) is left alone and Dinim (דינים) are swirling around it.

But the ultimate purpose of this severing, of this stage of disillusionment and the disconnection from the achor b'achor (אחור באחור) relationship is so that Malchut (מלכות) can then come to grow and be mitgadel (מתגדל) and develop its own sense of independency until it can come to a new type of relationship with Ze'ir Anpin (זעיר אנפין), with Adam. Which is what? Which is panim el panim (פנים אל פנים), that. The separation between the achor b'achor (אחור באחור) relationship that protects our vulnerability and this momentary traumatic severance, what's referred to as the nasira (נסירה), a cutting, a literal cutting, a surgical cut that's created at the backside that separates that codependent bond between Kudsha Brich Hu (קודשא בריך הוא) and Shechinta (שכינתא). And it leaves Shechina (שכינה) on its own. And Shechina (שכינה) is destitute. It doesn't even know where to get light from, doesn't know where to receive its mochin (מוחין) from. All it knows is the mochin (מוחין) that came from Ze'ir Anpin (זעיר אנפין). All it knows is what it means to live in illumination, doesn't know what it means to find God in concealment.

Rosh Hashanah as Din and Severance

And so it's this ma'avar (מעבר), it's this stage of the nasira (נסירה), that initial severance, that initial severing where on the one hand we're exposed, on the one hand we're scared. On the one hand we come to terms with the fact that I have nothing. I don't know what this is. I don't know who you are, Hashem. I don't have any basis for this relationship. I don't know what I believe in. I've seen the world and, you know, I'm not. I'm not so impressed. It's the stage of, like, momentary terror at the fact that. Wait a second. I'm no longer tethered in this compulsory way to the source of light. And there's a momentary sense of, like, maybe, maybe I remain separate from the source of light, God forbid.

And that's why Rosh Hashanah is a time of din (דין). It's a time of judgment. It's a time of preparing ourselves to enter into the extremes of that initial burst of gevurah (גבורה) of the year and to remain huddled down internally and to say, I know I'm going to come back. Panim el Panim (פנים אל פנים). Rosh Hashanah is the severance. Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of the Nasira (נסירה). It's a day of din (דין). It's a day of concealment. It's a day where the Nasira (נסירה), this separating begins. It's where we come to terms with the fact that in order to find you again, Hashem, in order to come back to you, Panim el Panim (פנים אל פנים), I'm going to have to go through this long winded process of feeling scared, of feeling awe, of asking you for everything, asking you for my life. Having nothing but a shofar to give you a cry of kri'ah (קריעה), a recognition of mimaamakim (ממעמקים). Karati cha Hashem (קראתי ה'). I can't rest on my laurels that I was receiving from Ze'ir Anpin (זעיר אנפין) before. I can't come to Hashem with my Rosh Hashanah. My was being fed to me from some, you know, source prior to me. I have to come to HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא) with my emunah (אמונה), with the base of myself. Specifically in the concealment we crown HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא). That's the avodah (עבודה) of Rosh Hashanah. We're aware that the surgical process is beginning, Hashem, and it's not going to feel good. And we're exposed to those places in our minds that we have to be mekabel ol malchut shamayim (מקבל על מלכות שמים). I have to come to find God again. I have to accept Hashem's kingship. I don't just live in a world of God's pre-existent kingship. I have to accept it. I have to be mekabel ol malchut shamayim (מקבל על מלכות שמים). So Hashem whispers to us this terrifying secret that ein melech belo am (אין מלך בלא עם) whispers to Nishmat Yisrael (נשמת ישראל) that, you know, I depend on you also for this. And Malchut (מלכות), which has been so codependent on its provider, when it hears that the provider is dependent on the receiver. Oh boy. Right? It doesn't want to hear that. What do you mean? Me? I can't do anything without you. But the secret of Rosh Hashanah is leaning in. As the heilige (הייליגע) Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa (רב שמחה בונים מפשיסחא) said that the entire concept of Rosh Hashanah can be summarized in this notion of. Of Hashem appears to me from a distance because Rosh Hashanah is about realizing that, ah, there is a distance appearing. We're not meant to overcome the distance on Rosh Hashanah. The entire process starts on Rosh Hashanah. The incision, the initial cut of that surgical removal between the dependency of us on this compulsory form of spirituality starts on Rosh Hashanah. And then each and every day of the aseret yemei teshuvah (עשרת ימי תשובה) is a different entrance into a different ma'amakim (מעמקים) where I come to terms with understanding. Okay, on Rosh Hashanah, my malchut (מלכות) is independent from Hashem, which means my faith is independent from Hashem. I choose faith. My faith is not based on something that precedes it. I choose it. That's the crowning of the king, that's the nasira (נסירה) of malchut (מלכות). And then there's the nasira (נסירה) of all of the other sefirot (ספירות) until you come to erev Yom Kippur (ערב יום כפור), which is a very important day where it's involved with chochmah (חכמה) etc. And then Yom Kippur (יום כפור) is where the nasira (נסירה) is done. Where the nasira (נסירה) is done. It's separate, Malchut (מלכות) is separate and it goes back to the womb and binah (בינה). And then all of Sukkot (סוכות) is all about this relational positioning in which now instead of a back to back artificial codependent relationship, there now is the emergence of a face to face mature relationship. Mochin (מוחין) d'gadlut (דגדלות), an awareness of my power as nishmat Yisrael (נשמת ישראל) to the point that Shemini Atzeret (שמיני עצרת), which is the ultimate panim el panim (פנים אל פנים), the highest yichud (יחוד) of the entire year. The highest yichud (יחוד) of the entire year is that panim el panim (פנים אל פנים) where we say there's no room for anybody else but Kudsha Brich Hu (קודשא בריך הוא) and Knesset Yisrael (כנסת ישראל). And it's the revelation that all relationships come down to that relationship devoid of anything. But first and foremost there's the nasira (נסירה).

The Courage to Build a Mature Relationship

And so this is, this is what's happening. We're entering into the courage to be confident in our relationship with Hashem on Rosh Hashanah, where we show up in spite of the fact that we're not illuminated. Every part of Rosh Hashanah reflects this. Every part of Rosh Hashanah reflects the willingness to enter into that place

where Hashem is not revealed to me. And I come to say Hashem, I'm here for it. I'm willing to accept your malchut (מלכות) me'rachok (מרחוק).

We'll just go through a few of them. Zichronot (זכרונות) - Yom HaZikaron (יום הזכרון). When a person learns something, when a person learns something or is receiving something afresh. So it's not a surprise that a person is moved by the information that they're giving or that they're receiving and a person feels that they're really consciously aware there's conscious contact between this content and the mind and it becomes contained within the mind. And it actually has an impact on me. I believe that this can change something. But like anything that lives, it dies. And it's nishkach k'met min halev (נשכה כמת מן הלב) and it's forgotten like the dead from the heart. Forgetting is an. Is a micro dosing of death where that which was illuminated in the mind now has receded into a territory that is no longer accessible to me.

That's what's happening in the stage of the nasira (נסירה), in the back to back relationship. I know everything, of course I know Ze'ir Anpin (זעיר אנפין), of course I know the shefa (שפע) that's coming down. I know the year I've lived the entire year. I know where Hashem is, I know where I stand. There's no questions, there's a certainty, but it's a dependent certainty. And that's when I know the information. And then forgetfulness sets in.

Forgetfulness sets in, which is where I begin to realize that, wait a second, that information is not as embedded as I thought it was. It's not as clear in the mind. Shiviti Hashem l'negdi tamid (שוייתי ה' לנגדי תמיד) is not. It doesn't say, start off and think shiviti Hashem (שוייתי ה') and then just maintain shiviti Hashem (שוייתי ה'). The l'negdi tamid (לנגדי תמיד) is like you have to always return back to trying to think about Shem Havaya (שם הוי"ה), that it's not like this one fell swoop of achor b'achor (אחור באחור). It's a process of. Of coming to a place of maturity.

And then I come to remember. And what memory is, is that return to the panim el panim (פנים אל פנים) type of relationship. Sure, I've severed myself from the original illumination of knowledge. I've forgotten, but I've also come to remember because memory is the awakening of those traces of the previous piece of information that was there. And it disappeared, but it never actually went away. So memory is the same thing. It's coming back to a secondary type of relationship which might not be as powerful as the original moment of thought, but in the end of the day it's more potent, it reveals a higher form of maturity. This is what the shofar is doing.

The Shofar: Beyond Words

Also when we go into the shofar, shofar is beyond words. It's becoming animal, it's sanctifying the element that b'sof davar (בסוף דבר) in the end of the day, I don't know. I am crying out to you, Hashem, like an animal. In the artificial relationship with Hashem we thought that we were awake, we thought we knew what was what. The shofar comes to wake us up from our slumber. It comes to wake us up and startle us and say, no, you don't know anything. I don't know anything. You're like an animal behemah (בהמה). And then through the aseret yemei teshuvah (עשרת ימי תשובה), through Sukkot (סוכות), we come to cultivate again a face to face relationship with HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא).

Rosh Hashanah is the concentration of the beginning, awareness of the fact that I am going to be a separate part in this relationship and I am going to be the one who has to come back to you, Hashem, in this relationship. It might not be that same artificial dependency where I think, Hashem, everything is good, the world is perfect, all people are good, I'm perfect, etc. There's a fall from grace, there's a breaking, there's a recognition that no, it's not azoi (אזוי). It's not like that doesn't look like that in real life, but there's a secret uncovering and an unfolding that awakens from within that shattering from within, that severing from within that cutting that is rooted in a far deeper and more primary form of maturity, which is my willingness to realize that even when I'm separate from you, Hashem, I still have fundamental confidence that I could come back to you. That's the avodah (עבודה) of Rosh Hashanah. It's accepting HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא). It's realizing that, Hashem, I'm here for the journey and I am going to build a relationship with you. This is hayear. And yes, it's hard when you're not revealed. It's hard when there's no prophecy. But you know what? In the absence of a panim el panim (פנים אל פנים) relationship, I'm going to be like the Talmud Bavli (תלמוד בבלי) and create a new form of relationship with you.

From Uman to HaMelech

This is why, when we say this is why people go to Uman (אומן), because Uman (אומן) is the farthest place in the earth. There's no lower place than Uman (אומן). It's a dark place, a concealed place, place of kelipah (קליפה). Now, thankfully we have Uman b'Eretz Yisrael (אומן בארץ ישראל). So the light is coming. But Uman (אומן) is the lowest place. And when we scream out HaMelech (המלך), we scream from the back of the room because no one's saying HaMelech (המלך) from the front of the shtender (שטענדער) at the beginning. Like a. From a person who understands, I'm panim el panim (פנים אל פנים) to you. I'm not panim el panim (פנים אל פנים). Yet I'm behind. I'm in the back of the shul (שול). I'm tired. I really want a coffee right now. But HaMelech (המלך), HaMelech (המלך), that's coming from me. I'm choosing that. That's what Hashem wants from us. He wants our choice. He wants us to lean in and accept him and accept the process of building the relationship.

The Joy Within the Fear

And it's only b'simchah (בשמחה), right? Because we know where we end up again. The simchah (שמחה) of Rosh Hashanah is fundamental, right. The Arizal said to tremble with fear in the time of the Nasira (נסירה), but the Gra (הגר"א) said to dance with joy. And both are true. Because even though we're going through this process of separation again, we know we hold in our minds that simchah (שמחה) of the future. We know that even in our separation, we're connected to you. Mei'rachok (מרחוק) Hashem nir'ah li (ה' נראה לי) doesn't mean that I was far and I saw you from a distance and I was aware that you were there. It means, no, There's a certain revelation of you, Hashem, specifically from within the rachok (רחוק) itself, specifically from the Akedah (עקידה), specifically from the Ayeh (איה). Ayeh haseh l'olah (איה השע לעלה), where are you, Hashem? That's the cry. The shofar is an awakening of Akedat Yitzchak (עקידת יצחק). Akedat Yitzchak (עקידת יצחק) was like, what? It's the pegisha (פגישה). It's. Nobody knows what it was. It was insane. We know that the voice that came out of that place was Ayeh (איה), which is crying out to God from a place of constriction. And Rosh Hashanah is the day that Yosef haTzadik (יוסף הצדיק) leaves the jail cell. The recognition that I can walk out the jail cell is the birth of maturity. That's what's happening on Rosh Hashanah.

Not Sleeping on Rosh Hashanah

So everything we do on Rosh Hashanah is about. That's why we don't sleep on Rosh Hashanah. Sleeping is sleeping. As rachmana litzlan (רחמנא ליצילן), A person knows if they have a netiyah (נטייה) towards, you know, or diagnosed the territory of depression, etc. Sleep is. Sleep is sometimes the only thing. It's not because I'm tired, but it's because, you know, I remember having clients who said in St. Louis, they said, I don't know where the strength for the next breath comes from. There's a certain cessation of kiyum (קיום). And so to sleep is to want to return back to that, you know, dependency based relationality with Hashem. I don't want to deal with reality. I don't want to deal with reality. Why? Because I can't deal with reality. Every not wanting to deal with reality or every refusal to deal with reality is rooted in the assumption, sometimes the very real assumption, sometimes an assumption that has been reconfirmed and affirmed by reality and others, but nevertheless an assumption that I can't. I can't face reality because I can't face reality. The only thing I could do is escape reality or engage in the thing that enables me to cope with reality.

But on Rosh Hashanah we're called to look at reality eye to eye. Don't go to sleep. Gaze at it unflinchingly. Be aware of it. Be aware of the Akedah (עקידה). Be aware of the fact that we be aware of the. The story of Chanah (חנה). Beware of these processes of descent for the sake of revelation. And by. By coming close to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, Hashem reveals again, this is just the chitzoniyyut (חיצוניות) of Rosh Hashanah.

The Inner Dimension: Connection Within Separation

The pnimiyut (פנימיות) is that there's a profound level of connection that HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא) is saturating us with. So that while it might appear to us that we're going through this independent work and we're separate, you know, b'sod (בסוד) tov (טוב), our kol nishmah (כל נשמה). We know that there's nothing that's done without the light of HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא) in our lives. And so it's to hold that. That Hashem, I'm safe in this process because I'm with you. As Ibn Gabirol (אבן גבירול) said about the Amim Nora'im (אמים נוראים). He said, I run from you to you, Hashem. I run from you. I run away from you. I run away from the dependency. But ultimately it's a return back to you. It's a return back to you.

The same processes that are happening on Rosh Hashanah are taking place on Purim (פורים). It's the same kavanot (כוונות), the same mechanisms, the same Nasira (נסירה). Except on Purim (פורים), the nes (נס) was that even when Malchut (מלכות) feels separate, it's not that she loses the vitality from above. She's drawing down her new own vitality, a vitality from the future. That's what's happening on Rosh Hashanah also. It's the impregnation of the year with a potency.

HaShanah: This Is THE Year

We have to say HaShanah (השנה), HaShanah (השנה). This is the. This is the Shanah (שנה) b'ezrat Hashem (בעזרת השם). We should be zocheh (זוכה) to enter into the chambers of changes with the confidence of Hashem gam ki elech b'gei tzalmavet v'lo ira ra ki atah imadi (גם כי אלך בגיא צלמות ולא אירא רע כי אתה עמדי). I am willing to descend down into that separation. I'm willing to go into that tear of the cross Satan that we say when we're thinking that the Satan tears. Tears things asunder. But I'm willing to go into that rift because you're there also, Hashem. And in that way, we come to scream HaMelech (המלך) from wherever we are in our lives. And this is what Hashem wants from us. Why Hashem wants it from us.

In this generation, we don't have to ask. That's. That's above and below. We don't ask questions like that. We have to ask what's mutal aleinu (מוטל עלינו) right in front of us right now. And it's to remember that, Hashem, we're with you even when we don't feel that you're with us. And we're with you when we don't feel that we're with you, we're always with you when we're face to face with you, we're with you when we're back to back with you when we're apparently separate from you we're with you when we. And we could be mamlich (ממליך) HaKadosh Baruch Hu (הקדוש ברוך הוא) on every stage in the relationship.

The Dynamism of Relationship

So then this is where relationships become dynamic. Dynamism means that every stage of the process is as fundamentally important and purposeful as the end result. So I'm looking at this as only. Oh, let me get to Shemini Atzeret (שמיני עצרת) panim el panim (פנים אל פנים). Then I've missed the point. There's a panim (פנים) of panim (פנים) of every day. There's a Shemini Atzeret (שמיני עצרת) on every single day. All of the yamim tovim (ימים טובים) are in each and every day. There's also the kavanah (כוונה) of the first brachah (ברכה) in Shemoneh Esrei (שמונה עשרה) is happening every second. Rosh Hashanah is just where it's at, Hashem. You know, it's a big day, but it's also a day to lean in with confidence and kind of stubborn faith that says, there's nothing that I'm afraid of, Hashem, because I'm with you.

Okay. Chevrach (חברה)? Yeah, sure. What time is that? I just want to. Yeah, 10:13. 10:13. Stay there. So I have, like 15 more minutes or so b'ezrat Hashem (בעזרת השם).