



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 24 | Rosh Hashanah

Skipping for Satan

Translated by Rabbi Shmuel Kesselman

General Editor: Rabbi Eliezer Robbins | **Senior Editor:** Rabbi Lazer Danzinger

Content Editor: Rabbi Zalmy Avtzon

© Copyright by Sichos In English 2025 ◦ 5785

A note on the translation: Rounded and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; curly brackets are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in curly brackets are those of the translator or editors and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Words in bold type are italicized in the original text.

Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation while maintaining readability. As in all translations, however, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists.

Your feedback is appreciated — please share your thoughts at info@projectlikkuteisichos.org

1.

CAN WE CONFUSE SATAN?

One of the reasons we do not mention Rosh Chodesh in the Rosh Hashanah prayers¹ is “to confuse Satan so that he will not know that today is Rosh Chodesh Tishrei. (Thus, he will not come to prosecute).”²

The same reason (“to confuse Satan”) is also given³ for the custom of not blessing the month of Tishrei on the Shabbos before (as we do on the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh every other month — *Shabbos Mevarchim*).

At first glance, this is confusing:

Satan is an angel who “attends” the Heavenly court, **etc.** As the book of *Iyov* (at the beginning of the book) explicitly states,⁴ Satan came on the Day of Judgment (Rosh Hashanah)⁵ among the sons of Hashem “to stand before Hashem.” How can we possibly imagine that we can “confuse” and “mislead” Satan in such a simple matter that he should overlook (because of this omission) something so well-publicized, in calendars, etc., etc. — that it is Rosh Hashanah?

2.

SANCTIFIED IN BEIS DIN, MAYBE

*Levush*⁶ also gives this reason: “To confuse Satan so that he will not know that it is Rosh Hashanah,” but he adds: “since the Jewish people did not **sanctify it.**”

We may attempt to resolve this problem based on a well-known principle — that establishing the months, etc., depends on Beis Din’s ruling: Rosh Chodesh is established exclusively through the sanctification of the Jewish people. When the Beis Din (as representatives of) the Jewish people) determines that a day is Rosh Chodesh, this day **becomes** Rosh Chodesh.

¹ Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim.*” sec. 591, par. 6. Quoting from *Levush* (“*Orach Chaim.*” sec. 581, par. 1, see also sec. 582, par. 6); *Minhagim LeMoreinu Harav Yitzchak Aizik Tirna, Chodesh Elul; Minhagim LeHarav Avraham Kloizner* (the teacher of the *Maharil*) *Minhagei Rosh Hashanah*, sec. 1, note 1.

² This is how it is written (i.e., in parentheses) in Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid.*

³ *Minhagei Maharak, Harav Yitzchak Aizik Tirna, and Levush* (ch. 581) there.

⁴ *Iyov* 1:6; note *Guide for the Perplexed*, sec. 3, ch. 22; *Ramban* on *Iyov* 2:1; see *Tzafnas Paaneach*, commenting on *Guide for the Perplexed*, *ibid.* (*Tzafnas Paaneach*, in his Torah commentary, *Devarim*, p. 416); *Responsa of Tzafnas Paaneach*, Dvinsk ed., vol. 1, ch. 101; this is not the place for further discussion.

⁵ See the commentaries on *Iyov* 1:6.

⁶ *Levush*, “*Orach Chaim.*” sec. 581, par. 1.

This dependency of Rosh Chodesh on the Jewish people is true to the extent that “when the ministering angels gather before the Holy One and ask, ‘When is Rosh Hashanah and when is Yom Kippur?’ the Holy One says to them, ‘You are asking Me!? Let you and Me go to the earthly court.’”⁷

Consequently, not mentioning Rosh Chodesh in the Rosh Hashanah prayers or on the prior Shabbos makes it seem as if the day had not been established as Rosh Chodesh Tishrei. Consequently, Satan does not know (for sure?)⁸ “that it is Rosh Hashanah.”

However, this explanation is insufficient:

a) On Rosh Hashanah, **many** acts indicate and emphasize that today is Rosh Hashanah (the first of Tishrei). As such, can we say that because “they did not sanctify it (Rosh Chodesh),” Satan does not know that it is Rosh Hashanah?

b) More importantly, “to confuse Satan” is also the reason given⁹ for two other customs unrelated to Rosh Chodesh: (a) “For this reason also, we do not blow the shofar on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, so that Satan will think that the Day of Judgment has passed.”¹⁰ (b) “Likewise, we begin to read *parshas Bereishis* on Simchas Torah so that Satan will be in the dark as to whether it is the beginning or end of the year.”¹¹

Our question resurfaces: How can we say that by not blowing the shofar on the eve of Rosh Hashanah and by not beginning to read *parshas Bereishis* on Rosh Hashanah, we will confuse Satan so that he should think that “the Day of Judgment has passed,” etc., especially since many of our practices affirm that it is Rosh Hashanah (and Rosh Chodesh)?

⁷ *Devarim Rabbah*, ch. 2, sec. 14 (and the sources cited by *Radal*, ad loc.).

⁸ {Question mark appears in the original.}

⁹ *Minhagei Maharak*, *Harav Yitzchak Aizik Tirna*, and *Levush* (sec. 581) there; *Maharil*, *Minhagei Yomim Noraim*, the second note (36a) *Mateh Moshe*, sec. 778; see also *Levush* and *Eliyah Rabbah*, beg. of sec. 581; *Levush*, beg. of ch. 669; et al.

¹⁰ This reason is quoted as being the actual halachic rationale by *Magen Avraham*, “*Orach Chaim*.” sec. 581, subsection 14; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Hosafos*,” sec. 581, at the end.

¹¹ *Minhagei Maharak*, *ibid*.

3.

CONFUSE HIM OUT OF A CLAIM

We can answer this question by prefacing it with the following consideration: The objective of confusing Satan is also quoted¹² as a reason for the custom of blowing the shofar during the month of Elul. We thereby confuse Satan so that “he will not know when Rosh Hashanah will fall out.”¹³

This is also difficult: How can we “fool” Satan so that he will not know “when Rosh Hashanah falls out”?

We can posit the following explanation:

We find that the idea of confusing Satan (concerning Rosh Hashanah) is mentioned in the Gemara¹⁴ regarding the mitzvah of blowing the shofar on Rosh Hashanah **in general**: “Rabbi Yitzchak said..., Why do we blow *tekiah* and *teruah* sounds while seated and again while standing? To confuse Satan.” Rashi explains:¹⁵ “So that he will not prosecute; when he hears how the Jewish people cherish the mitzvos, he is rendered speechless.” In other words, since the Jewish people are not content with blowing the *tekiah* and *teruah* sounds only once but repeat them, their love for the mitzvos is indisputable — and this silences Satan's accusations.

We can apply the same rationale to explain the idea of confusing Satan regarding blowing shofar during the month of Elul:

The point of blowing shofar during the month of Elul is (as is known),¹⁶ “to adjure the Jewish people to repent. As the verse says¹⁷, ‘If a shofar is blown in a city...’” Therefore, as a result of the Jewish people blowing the shofar and being aroused to repentance, Satan becomes “confused.” In other words, he thinks that the Jewish people have, through their teshuvah in the month of Elul, already been found worthy in **Elul**. Therefore, he thinks his task is pointless. On Rosh Hashanah, Satan has no grounds for any accusations — “he is rendered speechless.”

¹² *Rosh* (end of tractate *Rosh Hashanah*); *Ravya* (ibid., sec. 542); *Tur* (“*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 581) quoting *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* (see *Biur HaRadal* to the *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer*, ch. 46, sec. 20) and others.

¹³ *Minhagei Maharak*, ibid.; similar wording is used in *Minhagim LeMoreinu Harav Yitzchak Aizik Tirna, Mateh Moshe*.

¹⁴ *Rosh Hashanah* 16a ff.

¹⁵ The same explanation is offered by *Rabbeinu Chananel*, ibid.; *Meiri*, ibid.; *Aruch*, “*Erev*”; note *Targum Yonasan ben Uziel*, “*Pinchas, Bamidbar 29:1*”; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 585, par. 6.

¹⁶ See *Rosh* (tractate *Rosh Hashanah*, at the end); *Ravya* (ibid., sec. 542); *Tur* (“*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 581) quoting *Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* (ch. 46).

¹⁷ *Amos* 3:6.

DOUBTFUL PROSECUTION

On this basis, we can also appreciate what we mean when we say that (by blowing shofar throughout Elul) Satan “will not know when Rosh Hashanah falls out”:

“He will not know when Rosh Hashanah falls out” does not mean that he is clueless about (what is written in the calendar —) when the **day** (the time) of Rosh Hashanah falls out. Instead, he is in a fog about when the unique quality of Rosh Hashanah — the essence of Rosh Hashanah, the “**judgment and justice**” of Rosh Hashanah — will occur (that is, his opportunity to prosecute). [As *Maharil* **explicitly** writes:¹⁸ “And he does not know when the **judgment** takes place {to know when to come} and prosecute.”]

When a Jew repents properly **before** Rosh Hashanah, he is assured of being inscribed and sealed in the book of the righteous. His “judgment” was decided favorably in the month of Elul.

[Moreover, many sources say that a person can merit a favorable judgment even on other days of the year (not only Rosh Hashanah) through proper teshuvah and prayer. For example, King Chizkiyah,¹⁹ through prayer and repentance, brought about a Divine proclamation that “I will add fifteen years to your days.”²⁰ From this narrative, seemingly, the proclamation was not made on an especially auspicious day like Rosh Hashanah.]²¹

Therefore, the shofar-blowing during the month of Elul confuses Satan: He thinks that the Jewish people have already been found worthy in the month of Elul by being aroused to teshuvah (and his prosecution can no longer accomplish anything).

Thus, when he pursues his prosecution on Rosh Hashanah, it is, at best, doubtful, without conviction, etc.

According to this explanation, we can also appreciate why “we do not blow shofar on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, because then Satan will think that the Day of Judgment has passed”:

¹⁸ *Maharil, Minhagei Yomim Noraim*, the second note (36a).

¹⁹ *Melachim II* 20:1; *Yeshayahu* 38:1 ff.

²⁰ *Melachim II* 20:6; similar usage in *Yeshayahu* 38:5.

²¹ See *Ateres Rosh*, 4a; note *Turei Even* on *Rosh Hashanah* (17b).

To further confuse Satan so that he thinks that the Jewish people have already been found worthy during the month of Elul (by their arousal to repent by the shofar-blowing during Elul), we **stop** the Elul shofar-blowing on the eve of Rosh Hashanah: We no longer need to resort to the arousal of shofar-blowing.

[Satan knows that not blowing shofar on the eve of Rosh Hashanah is an established custom from **long ago**, and its reason and rationale is precisely for this purpose — to confuse him. But after all, this is a custom (a custom of the Jewish people), which is part of Torah,²² the Torah of **truth**. Consequently, if they were worthy, this would indeed be so (if they were genuinely meritorious). The work of Rosh Hashanah has already been done and “the Day of Judgment has passed.” Therefore, his prosecution is tentative and flimsy, as mentioned above.]

5.

WE DON'T NEED THE EXTRAS

Similarly, we can explain the other practices from which we refrain on Rosh Hashanah in order “to confuse Satan” so that he does not know it is Rosh Hashanah:

The fact that Rosh Hashanah coincides with Rosh Chodesh Tishrei is not only a matter of **timing** (that is, the beginning of the year is **automatically** the beginning of a month). Instead, this fact also contributes to (and in the words of the Talmud,²³ “it benefits”) the essence of Rosh Hashanah: The spiritual arousal that comes from it being Rosh Chodesh enhances the intensity and *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah itself. As a result, this spiritual awakening contributes to the outcome — being found favorable in judgment.

The same applies to the idea that “it would have been appropriate to read *parshas Bereishis* on Rosh Hashanah.”²⁴ The reason for this is not only because Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of the year (in terms of **time**), but also because {reading} “the conclusion of the Torah” and “the beginning of the Torah” contribute to the Jewish people’s merits.

Both this spiritual arousal and the added merits of the Jewish people are clearly beneficial as part of the *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah, helping us to be found favorable in judgment.

This is why we don’t mention Rosh Chodesh on Rosh Hashanah — “to confuse Satan so that he does not realize that today is Rosh Chodesh Tishrei.” (This doesn’t mean to keep Satan

²² *Menachos* 20b, *Tosafos*, s.v., “*nifsal*”; et al.

²³ *Zevachim* 91a.

²⁴ *Levush*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 581, par. 1.

in the dark about the **date** of Rosh Chodesh falling on Rosh Hashanah but rather about its more **profound significance** and *avodah*):

Since the Jewish people do not mention Rosh Chodesh on Rosh Hashanah, Satan will not detect the spiritual arousal and *avodah* of Rosh Chodesh within Rosh Hashanah — “he will not know that today is Rosh Chodesh.”

Similarly, by beginning to read *Bereishis* on Simchas Torah rather than on Rosh Hashanah, Satan won’t grasp the significance of the year’s beginning. He’ll assume the *avodah* of the new year lacks the strength and impact usually associated with the conclusion and beginning of the Torah — “he will not understand the beginning of the year, etc.”

This confusion will prevent Satan from prosecuting. This is because the Jewish people, as explained earlier, are worthy enough that their *avodah* is so complete and elevated that they don’t need the **extra** arousal of Rosh Chodesh or the conclusion and beginning of the Torah to be found favorable in judgment.

6.

HOWEVER...

However, this explanation is not altogether smooth:

According to this explanation, we confuse Satan by not mentioning Rosh Chodesh (and not beginning to read *parshas Bereishis*). However, the **reason** for the lack of (or weakness in) his prosecution (“he will not come to prosecute”) is primarily because he believes the *avodah* of **Rosh Hashanah** may already be complete and that the Jewish people do not need the arousal and merits of Rosh Chodesh and concluding the Torah {reading}.

Accordingly, the halachic authorities should have emphasized (not just the negative aspect — “he doesn't know” that it is Rosh Chodesh, etc., but at least **also**) the positive aspect (the *avodah*) in this matter (resembling the *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah).

Yet, the wording used is more vague:²⁵ “We do not customarily mention Rosh Chodesh explicitly on Rosh Hashanah... to confuse Satan so that he should not know that today is Rosh Chodesh Tishrei (he will not come to prosecute).” This suggests that Satan refrains from prosecuting simply because “he does not know that today is Rosh Chodesh Tishrei.”

[This is different from the reasoning behind not blowing the shofar on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, where the concern is that Satan might think the Day of Judgment has already

²⁵ Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, *ibid*.

passed. In that case, the wording **emphasizes the earlier blowing** during Elul. The act of blowing throughout the month of Elul leads Satan to believe that “the Day of Judgment has passed.”]

7.

MISSING SOMETHING

We can posit that confusing Satan in the context of **these** two matters (not mentioning Rosh Chodesh in Rosh Hashanah liturgy and beginning to read *parshas Bereishis* on Simchas Torah) means as follows:

Satan sees that on Rosh Hashanah the Jewish people do not mention — and consequently, do not feel the arousal of — Rosh Chodesh. Nor do they evoke the merit of completing and restarting the reading of the Torah. When this happens, “his prosecution is weakened.” Meaning, Satan believes that the Jewish people’s *avodah* is deficient, and so there is no need to exert himself to find further faults in the Jewish people.

Although Satan knows this — he knows that we are doing this because we intend to confuse **him** — nevertheless, in reality, the arousal and merit (with all the consequences it brings) are missing: We do not experience the arousal, etc., of Rosh Chodesh, and we do not gain the virtue of completing and beginning the Torah.

8.

BREAKING AS A STEP INTO THE SOLUTION

Based on this, however, the inverse question arises:

How can we remove all these potential advantages from the Jewish people? True, the intent is to confuse Satan. But as discussed above, at the end of the day, the Jewish people are **missing** these special *avodos* on Rosh Hashanah. They do not experience the spiritual inspiration caused by the shofar on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, nor do they experience the inspiration caused by mentioning Rosh Chodesh, and they do not “have in hand” the merits of concluding and beginning the Torah.

The explanation is as follows:

The very fact that we refrain from these practices “to confuse Satan” should, and in fact does, bring about an even more profound awakening of teshuvah than that which would be accomplished through these practices themselves.

This awakening is “the voice coming forth from the **innermost** part of the heart.” This emotion is evoked “through the bitterness in his soul over his distance from Hashem, for he is extremely far from Him.”²⁶

The Jewish person experiences a sense of fierce bitterness over “his distance from Hashem.” When a person considers that these good things are withheld “to confuse Satan,” he truly recognizes his spiritual state. That is, Satan is given so much sway over a person to the extent that to neutralize Satan we must **deprive** the person of an opportunity to hear the shofar blown {on erev Rosh Hashanah}, mention Rosh Chodesh, and read the *parshas Bereishis* (on Rosh Hashanah).

In a certain sense, this arousal of teshuvah is even more profound than that which comes through blowing the shofar: The impetus for teshuvah when hearing the shofar blowing comes from something external to the person (and the same applies to the reading of *parshas Bereishis* and the mentioning of Rosh Chodesh).

However, the stirring of teshuvah that comes from the “not” — that one is held back from blowing the shofar, etc. — comes from the **person**, from **his** situation.

We can suggest that this phenomenon is exemplified in the narrative Chassidim tell about the Rebbe (Rashab, at the beginning of his leadership):²⁷

A Jew entered for a private audience with the Rebbe and asked eagerly for a blessing about a grave matter for which he needed a great arousal of mercy. The Rebbe replied that his hands were tied.

After hearing this disheartening reply, the person exited the Rebbe’s room and burst into bitter tears. While walking away tearfully, he met Reb Zalman Aharon (the Rebbe’s brother). When Reb Zalman Aharon asked why the chassid was crying so bitterly, he told him what had happened.

Reb Zalman Aharon went into his brother, the Rebbe’s, study (as mentioned, this story occurred at the beginning of the Rebbe’s leadership) and asked: “How is it possible that when

²⁶ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Nitzavim*” (44c, 45a) — while explaining the advantage of the blowing of the shofar over the Divine service of Torah and mitzvos generally.

²⁷ See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 126.

someone implores you for a blessing, you say that you cannot help? And to the extent that the petitioner cries with bitter tears from great pain?!"

Hearing this, the Rebbe put on his *gartel* and asked for the Jew to be called back. After he re-entered, the Rebbe blessed him, and the blessing was fulfilled.

At first glance, this story is confusing: Since the Rebbe could help him (as is evident from the end of the story), why didn't the Rebbe do so at the outset? Why did he first refuse in a way that brought the chassid to tears, etc.?

A (possible) explanation consistent with what we explained above:

The Jew who asked the Rebbe for a blessing was **then** unfit for the blessing due to his spiritual state. He was unworthy and could not receive the great blessing he required. Therefore, the Rebbe was powerless to help.

However, the Rebbe's initial answer caused the Jew to feel so broken that he poured out his heart before Hashem. His brokenhearted contriteness transformed him entirely, making him a vessel fit for the blessing of Hashem through the Rebbe.

9.

BECAUSE HASHEM SAID SO

A deeper perspective:

Not only does forgoing these practices to confuse Satan evoke a deeper arousal of repentance, but truthfully, the Jewish people do not actually forfeit the value of the matters that they omit to confuse Satan.

The fact that we refrain from doing these things is a Jewish custom, which is **Torah**²⁸ — it becomes an act of **fulfillment** (action) of the Torah, which we do with great joy.

When a person fulfills Torah and mitzvos because they resonate intellectually or otherwise, distinctions make sense — the person will be less thrilled to fulfill a custom by *not* doing an action than he will be to fulfill a custom by doing an action.

[This is Satan's thought process: Ultimately, it seems that the avodah of the Jewish people is **actually** missing out. Moreover, perhaps Satan is unaware of the Jewish person's

²⁸ {*Magen Avraham*, sec. 307, par. 16.}

“inner voice,” and perhaps he is even unaware of {some of} their thoughts. After all, there are levels in thought.]²⁹

But from the perspective of the King’s **will**, the truth of the matter is that there is no distinction between one form of *avodah* and another.

When a Jewish person fulfills mitzvos with the realization that “He has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us,” then to the person, the type of *avodah* makes no difference.

This applies even when it appears that a Jew **misses** an opportunity to do something positive. However, since he knows this “{custom} is Torah,” he **does** it with great joy and **gladness**.

This joyful acceptance ensures that he is inscribed and sealed for a good and sweet year in this plane of existence,³⁰ materially and spiritually combined.

— From talks delivered *Simchas Torah* night and *Motzaei Shabbos parshas Bereishis*
5739 (1978)

²⁹ See *Shabbos* 12b, *Tosafos*, s.v., “*she’ein*”; et al.

³⁰ {In the original Hebrew, “*le’mateh me’asarah tefachim*”; lit., “lower than ten handbreaths.” Up to a height of ten handbreadths from the ground is deemed to be a part of the ground, halachically. For example, see Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 363, par. 24; and countless places in Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi.}