

~ היום הרת עולם ~

An in-depth essay on the Nusach of the Yomim Noraim Tefillos

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The Rosh Hashona Musaf contains within it the three special Brachos of Malchios, Zichronos and Shofaros. At the end of each Brocha, the Shofar is sounded after which we recite the Piyutim *Hayom Haras Olam* and *Areshes Sefaseinu*.

"היום הרת עולם היום יעמיד במשפט כל יצורי עולמים אם כבדים אם כעבדים אם כבנים רחמנו כרחם אב על בנים ואם כעבדים עינינו לך תליות עד שתהגנו ותוציא כאור משפטנו איום קדוש"

Today the world is born. Today He will summon all of the creations throughout the worlds to stand in judgment. Whether we are Your children, or whether we are Your servants; If we are Your children, have mercy upon us as a father would upon his children, And if we are Your servants, our eyes are turned to You, until You show us favour, And You bring our judgment to light, O Awesome One, Holy One

It is not known when and by whom the passage *Hayom Haras Olam* was composed. What we do know is that the custom of reciting this passage after sounding the Shofar in Musaf is an ancient one that dates back hundreds of years.

It is referenced in the Tur and Shulchan Aruch and is discussed by numerous Rishonim including; Rashi¹, Raavan², Rabbeinu Yechiel³, Mahari"l and the Sefer HaRokeach.

In Ashkenaz, the custom is that *Hayom Haras Olam* is only recited in the Chazaras Hashatz⁴. Minhag Hasefaradim is to recite *Hayom Haras Olam* during the silent Amidah as well⁵.

When Rosh Hashona falls on Shabbos and the Shofar is not blown, *Areshes Sefaseinu* is not said⁶ because it refers to the blowing of the Shofar. *Hayom Haras Olam* is still recited. Maharil⁷ writes that *Areshes Sefaseinu* is still recited on Shabbos.

In those communities where the Shofar is sounded in the silent Amidah, *Hayom Haras Olam* is recited. However, if one has not yet reached the conclusion of the Brocha and have to pause to hear the Shofar, they do not say *Hayom Haras Olam* at that point but rather when they reach the proper place at the conclusion of the Bracha. *Areshes Sefaseinu* is not recited in the silent Amidah⁸. Chabad custom is that *Hayom Haras Olam* is not recited in the silent Amidah.

~ *Hayom Haras Olam* – The birth or pregnancy of the world? ~

¹ Siddur Rashi and Sefer Hapardes

² Pirush on the Siddur

³ Tanya Rabasi Hilchos Rosh Hashona 75

⁴ Tur OC 595

⁵ Beis Yosef. Avudraham and Bach quoting Siddur Harambam Seder Hatefillos

⁶ Minhagim

⁷ Hilchos Shofar Siman 5

⁸ Mateh Efraim 591:13

Many Machzorim translate it as “Today is the birth(day) of the world.” This follows the explanation of Avudraham. Even though the word *Haras* means conception or pregnancy (הריון), it can also be used to describe birth⁹. On Rosh Hashona, when Adam was created, the birth (creation) of the world was complete.

There are those who suggest that the phraseology of the *Paytan* is a play on the Pasuk in Yirmiyahu¹⁰ ורחמה הרת עולם, lit. her womb will be pregnant forever. Yirmiyahu curses the day that he was born. He laments why no one had killed him in the womb so that his mother’s womb would be a place of gestation forever.

~ When was the world created?

In the Rosh Hashona Musaf we say a similar statement to *Hayom Haras Olam*; זה היום תחילת מעשיך, *this is the day of the beginning of your handiwork* (of Creation). When the world was created is subject to a dispute. The Gemara¹¹ asks, when we say this phrase in our Rosh Hashona Tefillos, whose view does this reflect?

The Gemara answers that this is the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer, who teaches¹² that the world was created in Tishrei. (The first of Tishrei marks the creation of man, the pinnacle and actualisation of the intent in Creation¹³. Man was created on Day six. The first day and beginning of Creation took place on the 25th of Elul).

Rabbi Yehoshua however is of the opinion that the world was created in Nissan. (Man was created on the first of Nissan and creation began on the 25th of Adar).

Tosfos¹⁴ records the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam that the two Tanaim are not arguing. Using the dictum אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים, “these and these are the words of the living G-d”, he explains that the plan to create the world arose in Hashem’s thought in Tishrei. The actual creation took place in Nissan.

(Chassidus quotes the resolution that Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua are not in dispute. However it inverses the opinions as taught by Rabbeinu Tam, teaching that the actual creation took place in Tishrei whereas creation in thought took place during Nissan¹⁵).

Based on Rabbeinu Tam’s resolution, that the actual creation took place in Nissan and not in Tishrei, the Acharonim¹⁶ question how we can say *Hayom Haras Olam* on Rosh Hashona? Bach¹⁷ similarly questions how we can say *Zeh Hayom Techilas Maasecha* if the actual creation took place in Nissan?

Elya Rabbah¹⁸ writes that on the contrary, Rabbeinu Tam’s view is more compatible with the literal meaning of the word *Haras*. The literal meaning of *Haras* is not birth but rather conception or pregnancy. In Hashem’s thought, before being brought into actualisation, the world was like a foetus concealed within the womb of its mother.

⁹ Elya Zuta 592:3, Elya Rabbah 592:6

¹⁰ Yirmiyahu 20:17

¹¹ Rosh Hashona 27a

¹² Rosh Hashona 10b

¹³ See Maharsha Rosh Hashona 27b that before man was created it was as though nothing else was created.

¹⁴ Rosh Hashona 27a ד"ה כמאן

¹⁵ See Likutei Sichos volume 16 p483 footnote 20. This is also the opinion found in Sifrei Kabbalah; Zohar and Tikunei Zohar and Pri Eitz Chaim.

¹⁶ Magen Avraham 592:1

¹⁷ End of Siman 591

¹⁸ ibid

Bach notes that we say *Zeh Hayom Techilas Maasecha* because it is the beginning of Hashem's judgement of the world. This answer is based on Tosfos¹⁹ who writes that Rosh Hashona is the beginning of judgement whether the world deserves to endure. Therefore, in a way, it is like the world's existence is secured and born on this day.

Rabbi Avraham Danzig (1748-1820), author of *Chayei Adam*, writes that on Rosh Hashona through the Shofar and we show how we are accepting Hashem's Kingship and the decrees that He places upon us. We begin our lives anew as though this very day we were born.

Machatzis Hashekel²⁰ (Rabbi Shmuel Halevi Kolin) writes that Tosfos' answer that Tishrei marks creation in thought is still compatible with the nusach of our davening that Rosh Hashona is the beginning of Hashem's work and is the birth of the world. The *Novi*²¹ says concerning Hashem "My thoughts are not your thoughts". Our thoughts do not have the capacity to create on any level. However Hashem's thought affects and creates in a refined spiritual state. Therefore even Hashem's thought is considered like creative action, making the first of Tishrei the birth of the world.

~ The world was created for Teshuvah

Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (1789-1869) in his commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*, *Chochmas Shlomo*, writes a beautiful *Derush* on the meaning of *Hayom Haras Olam*;

Our sages teach that Teshuvah preceded the creation of the world. Were it not for Teshuvah, Hashem would not have created the world as man would sin and He would have to destroy it. Therefore, the creation of the world depends on Teshuvah. The time which is most conducive to Teshuvah is Tishrei. When we say *Hayom Haras Olam*, it is as though the world was created today because Hashem foresaw this day as the time of Teshuvah and decided to create the world.

He continues that the debate between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua is not about when the world was created but rather is a debate over whose service is greater; the perfect Tzaddik or the Baal Teshuvah²². The question being discussed is for the sake of whom was the world created and whose service is the ultimate purpose for Creation.

The month of Nissan reflects the Tzaddikim. Matzah verses Chometz represents the Yetzer Hora whereas Matzah represents the Tzaddikim who have conquered their Yetzer Hora and have not impulse for sin. Rabbi Yehoshua, who says that the world was created in Nissan, maintains that the world was created for the Tzaddikim.

Tishrei as a time of Teshuva reflects the Baalei Teshuvah. Rabbi Eliezer, who says that the world was created in Tishrei, says that the world was created in the merit and for the service of the Baal Teshuvah.

When we say *Hayom Haras Olam*, we confirm that the world was created for the Baal Teshuvah in accordance with Rabbi Eliezer. This is why *Hayom Haras Olam* follows the sounding of the Shofar which is the call to arouse us to Teshuvah.

¹⁹ Rosh Hashona 27a ד"ה כמאן

²⁰ 592:1

²¹ Yishayahu 55:8

²² See Sanhedrin 99a and Brachos 34b for an argument between the sages as to who is greater, the Tzaddik or the Baal Teshuvah

Rabbi Eliezer Baal HaRokeach explains that Rosh Hashona is a time of Din. The Shofar arouses Hashem's mercy and compassion to replace the attribute of Din. It is considered as though the world is born anew.

~ Other Translations of *Hayom Haras Olam* ~

Not everyone translates *Haras* as meaning birth or pregnancy. Because of the difficulty reconciling this explanation with Rabbeinu Tam's view that Creation took place in Nissan, some sources offer alternate explanations of the phrase *Haras Olam*.

~ Today the world is being judged

Rabbeinu Yechiel quotes a Mefarsh that the word *Haras* means judgement. He brings proof for this interpretation from the Aramaic translation on Mishlei which translates the words מצה, מדון, ריב, (words which mean strife or judgement) as הרת.²³ This translation fits well with the continuation of the Piyut – היום יעמיד במשפט, today He will summon them to stand in judgement.

The source of this interpretation (the Mefarsh) is the Sefer HaPardes attributed to Rashi and his Talmidim. Sefer HaPardes questions, if creation began on the 25th of Elul, how can we say *Hayom Haras Olam* on the first of Tishrei. He concludes that *Haras* means judgement.

In the Pirush of the Siddur and Machzor of Rabbi Elazar ben Nasan of Magentza (a Rishon known as Raava"n), he explains that the fear of judgement on Rosh Hashona is like the fear of a woman in labour.

~ Today the world trembles

On Rosh Hashona 5650 (1890), the Rebbe Rashab translated *Hayom Haras Olam* as Today the world trembles (from the root רתת – to tremble is להרתית). This explanation is attributed to the Alter Rebbe²⁴. The world trembles because of Hashem's judgement of all of Creation.

On a deeper level, the Ariza"l teaches that on Erev Rosh Hashona, the G-dly vitality invested within the world withdraws back to its source, leaving the world in a faint-like state. The world trembles in limbo as it awaits the new and greater G-dly light which is drawn down into the world (the world returns to a state of calm at the time of *Shehecheyanu* on Simchas Torah)²⁵.

~ Explanations according to Chassidus ~

In his commentary on Tehillim, the Tzemach Tzedek²⁶ explains why Rosh Hashona is likened to pregnancy and birth, according to the mystical teachings of Chassidus.

The nine months of a physical pregnancy parallel the nine *Tzimtzumim* (contractions of the Divine light) which enable the Divine light of the world of *Atzilus* to be "born" into the world of *Beriah*.

²³ Later commentaries note that in our Aramaic translation, this translation cannot be found. In one place the Aramaic חרתא is used. Perhaps in the Girsas of the Targum being referenced the word was spelled הרתא instead of חרתא

²⁴ Maamar Kinyan Chaim – Kuntreisim vol 1 p10

²⁵ See Likutei Diburim 1 p5

²⁶ Yahal Ohr 20:9. This chapter of Tehillim has 9 Pesukim which correspond to the 9 months of pregnancy. It is a chapter which describes deliverance on a day of suffering and is connected to birth. There is a minhag to recite this Kapitel each day throughout pregnancy.

These are the nine Sefiros in the world of *Atzilus* (from *Chochma* to *Yesod*) which bring down the Divine light into the Sefira of *Malchus*.

Malchus of the world of *Atzilus* is like a mother's womb where the Divine light goes through the process of gestation. From there, the light emerges to be born into the world of *Beriah* which is a new independent being like a child being born.

Every year on Rosh Hashona, a new Divine light is drawn into the world. It is also the day of the birth of the Neshama of Adam Harishon. Their birth into the world also is preceded by this process of "gestation" which is connected to the number nine.

The Divine light is drawn down into the worlds through the Shofar and through the Rosh Hashona Tefillos. Hence Rosh Hashona is referred to as *Haras Olam*, the pregnancy/birth of the world.

It is for this reason that Biblically we are required to sound nine Shofar notes. The sounds of the Shofar are called *Yevava* (wailing) and are like the cries of a woman in labour. The Rosh Hashona Musaf has nine Brachos. These nine Brachos correspond to the nine months of gestation²⁷. They also correspond to the nine times Chana mentioned Hashem's name in her Tefillah²⁸ (which is read as the Haftorah for the first Day of Rosh Hashona because on Rosh Hashona, Chana was remembered to conceive).

~ Pregnancy and birth of blessings

The Frierdike Rebbe²⁹ explains that on Rosh Hashona all of the physical and spiritual blessings for the new year are drawn down. These blessings are dependent on the judgement of Rosh Hashona. However, on Rosh Hashona they are drawn down in a general and hidden state. This is the meaning of the verse **ליוֹם חָגוּנוּ בְּכֶסֶד** which comes from the word **כֶּסֶד** meaning concealed³⁰.

These blessings, become revealed and actualised through the course of the year. If and how they will become manifest depends on daily judgements³¹.

During pregnancy, the foetus is present but it is hidden and cannot be seen until it is born. For this reason, we refer to Rosh Hashona as *Haras Olam*, the pregnancy of the world. The blessings and Divine energies that are drawn down on Rosh Hashona are hidden in the spiritual realms, waiting to be actualised and born into the world into our physical reality and lives.

May we all be blessed this Rosh Hashona with abundant goodness and blessing, both material and spiritual. And may these blessings be born into our lives, each according to what they need and desire for themselves and their families. And may we be Zoche this year to the coming of Moshiach and the Geulah Shleimah, which is likened to emergence and birth from the constraints and concealments of the gestation of Golus.

²⁷ Rokeach

²⁸ See Brachos 29a

²⁹ Sefer Hamaamarim 5692 p18

³⁰ See Beitza 16a and commentary of Rashi

³¹ See Rosh Hashona 16a