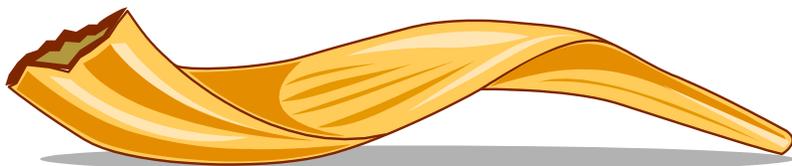


# SHOFAR שופר



PUBLISHED BY THE COMMUNITY SYNAGOGUE OF MONSEY  
VOLUME 41, NO. 1 TISHREI - KISLEV 5766 OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2005

## Defining Empathy: A Rosh Hashana Message

*Rav Moshe Dovid Tendler*

The Daf Yomi studied on the last Erev Shabbos of the year 5765, records the promise of Hashem:

כל המרחם על הבריות  
מרחמין עליו מן השמים

[שבת קנ"א:]

"Whoever shows empathy for others will be rewarded by Hashem's empathy".

What impacts on our emotions to elicit the emotion of "rachmanus" and a sense of grieving? What occurrence, what event tugs at our heart so strongly that we feel compelled to help?

Disasters in far away lands do not lend to vicarious grieving unless the world press personalizes the tragedy by reporting details of individual or familial suffering. Chronic disasters do not resonate at an individual level. AIDS kills 8,000 people daily. Malaria and tuberculosis each kill almost 2 million people yearly. These 3 chronic disasters account for 16,000 preventable deaths daily. Even the Asian tsunami or the New Orleans catastrophes may not cause us to grieve. But these dramatic events do disrupt our sense of stability and shatter our assumptions of safety and tranquillity. The September 11 terrorist

attack on our country because of its proximity to our homes and because many do know some of the victims, did and does elicit the emotions of grief and empathy.

The reality that despite our increased knowledge of nature we do not control neither the forces of nature which heed only the commands of the Creator, nor the destructive intent of the animal harbored in the heart of terrorist-man, exposes our vulnerability, our helplessness.

We are descendants of Avraham and Sara and therefore have special obligations.

כל המרחם על הבריות בידוע שהוא  
מזרעו של אברהם [ביצה ל"ב:]

Empathy, concern for the plight of every man/woman is to be our genetic trait. Even more so, when those suffering are our brethren, embraced by the Divine commandment:

ואהבת לרעך כמוך!

Their anguish causes us to grieve with them and to reach out to them to ameliorate their grief. The families that heroically settled on the sand dunes of Gaza and Gush Katif and transformed them into a Gan Eden, suffered a tragedy of catastrophic proportions. They too were victims of events never envisioned.

a) the irrational behavior of their government.

b) the insensitivity and even hatred of the anti-religious leftists in government and universities.

Their orderly, structured world suddenly came to an end, disrupting their sense of stability and predictability. Their plight brings sadness to our hearts and deep concern for their immediate future. We are anxious to do what we can to lighten their burdens. During the next months we will be informed as to how to direct our emotions into acts of "chesed" and "tzedaka". I am confident that our response will be as expected from **זרע אברהם** - the sons and daughters of Avraham and Sara. Hashem's response will surely be as promised:

**מרחמים עליו מן השמים :**

to inscribe us and our loved ones for a year of health and contentment

**תחל שנת סליחה וכפרה**