



New Year Campaign Speeches

On Rosh Hashanah, G-d and the Jewish people “give campaign speeches” to one another.

The Hidden Messages in the Rosh Hashanah Torah Reading

We all know the routine: before every election, each candidate delivers their “big speech”—you know, the one meant to convince us why we should vote for them.

Well, the Jewish people have a similar tradition—except we hold elections every year, not every four or five years! On Rosh Hashanah, we renew our choice to crown G-d as the King of the world for another term. And at the same time, G-d chooses us, once again, to be His people for the coming year.

Rosh Hashanah is a day of ‘elections.’ Jews from all over gather in shul to listen to G-d’s ‘campaign speech,’ reminding us why we should re-elect Him. And in return, we give our own little pitch, hoping He’ll pick us as His chosen people for another year.

The Rebbe explains (*Toras Menachem*, vol. 38, p. 272) that prayer on Rosh Hashanah, like on other holidays, has two main parts: the prayer itself and the Torah reading. The Torah reading is like G-d’s message to us, coming down from above—kind of like water flowing downward. It’s G-d’s way of saying, “Here’s what I want from you.” Meanwhile, our prayers are like fire, rising from below as we reach up to connect with Him.

So, what’s the ‘campaign speech’ that G-d delivers during the Torah reading on Rosh Hashanah? It’s the story of Yitzchak’s birth. G-d promised Avraham that he would have a son—when Avraham was already 70 years old! Sarah, at the time, was no spring chicken either, already 60. But 17 years passed, and still no baby. So, Sarah came up

with a plan: she suggested that Avraham marry her maidservant, Hagar. Avraham took the advice, and Hagar gave birth to Yishmael. Then, another 13 years went by, and finally, Yitzchak was born. (Talk about delayed gratification!)

But then Sarah decided that it was time for Hagar and Yishmael to go. She sent them away, and they wandered the desert until Yishmael was on the brink of death from thirst. G-d performed a miracle, revealing a well of water and saving their lives. Not only that, but G-d also promised Hagar that Yishmael would become the father of a great nation.

Now, here's where G-d's 'speech' gets interesting. He's saying, "Look, I promised Avraham a son, and even though it took some time, I kept My word. Yitzchak was born. And, by the way, I didn't forget about Yishmael either. He became the father of a great nation too. When I give a blessing, it's never at someone else's expense! Sarah had Yitzchak, but Hagar and Yishmael weren't left behind. From Yitzchak came the Jewish people, and from Yishmael, the Arab nations."

Trust Me

The next part of G-d's "speech" comes in the *haftarah* that we read on Rosh Hashanah. These *haftarot* are the words of the prophets, delivering G-d's message to the Jewish people. In this particular *haftarah*, we hear the moving story of Chana, who was married to Elkanah. Elkanah had another wife, Peninah, who had children, while Chana remained childless.

Chana went to the Mishkan in Shiloh to pray fervently for a child. Though G-d didn't appear to her directly, Eli, the Kohen Gadol, noticed her and asked what was troubling her. After hearing her heartfelt plea for a child, Eli promised that G-d would grant her request. And sure enough, Chana gave birth to a son—Shmuel the prophet.

Here, G-d's message to us is clear: *Trust Me*. I have a proven track record. It might take longer than expected, and yes, we often lack the patience to wait. We want things to happen right here and now. But in the end, G-d always delivers, often beyond our expectations.

Who would have thought that there would come a day when Jews could observe Torah and mitzvot freely in every corner of the world? Who could have imagined that there would be a time when not a single government on earth would officially prevent Jews from practicing their religion?

After such a “speech,” how could we not be convinced? And with that, we blow the shofar, symbolizing our re-crowning of G-d as the King of the world. This is the annual coronation ceremony, where the Jewish people reaffirm G-d’s kingship over the entire world.

The Jewish People Don’t Disappoint

Now it’s our turn. After G-d gives His “speech,” we, the Jewish people, need to convince Him to choose us again as His “beloved nation,” His representatives here on earth. Our ‘speech’ comes in the form of the *Mussaf* prayer. In this prayer, we remind G-d just how long we’ve been loyal to Him. We retell the story of the *Akeidah*, where Avraham was willing to sacrifice his only son, Yitzchak, just because G-d asked him to.

Then, we remind Him of the defining moment of the Exodus from Egypt. We recall how an entire nation—men, women, and children—was ready to leave a comfortable, established land to trek into the unknown desert. “*Lechtech acharai bamidbar*,” G-d says. We didn’t ask, “Where will we get diapers for the babies?” or “How will we find medicine for the elderly?” We didn’t worry about food, water, or shelter. We simply followed Moshe into the wilderness with complete trust.

When the time came for the giving of the Torah, no other nation even wanted to hear about the Ten Commandments. The descendants of Yishmael, Hagar’s grandchildren, didn’t want to accept “Do not steal”—they weren’t willing to give up their comfortable lifestyle. The children of Esav didn’t want to hear “Do not murder” because they believed in living by the sword. The angels went from nation to nation, offering the Torah, but no one was interested.

Only the Jewish people said, “Na’aseh v’nishma”—“We will do and we will listen.” From that moment until today, no other nation has preserved their religion and traditions with the same dedication as the Jewish people. Other nations, over the centuries, have changed their beliefs, their philosophies, and their practices to fit the times. Their rituals adapted to their surroundings—Romans became Christians, Arabs became Muslims, and so on. But the Jewish people? We’ve stayed loyal to our faith and heritage.

I recently heard about a family that made it into the Guinness Book of World Records—the oldest sibling is 101 years old, and together, all the siblings have a combined age of 700! Impressive, right? But think about it: if anyone deserves a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records, it’s the Jewish people! Where else can you find a nation

that's been worshipping the same G-d, keeping the same commandments, and preserving the same traditions for 3,300 years?

And where else can you find a nation that's stubbornly upheld the mitzvah of *brit milah*—circumcision—for nearly 4,000 years, no matter what the rest of the world says? Whether it's Germany or San Francisco trying to ban it, we've never given up on *brit milah*. And we don't do it because some pediatric association declared it's good for your health (though, to be fair, circumcised men are statistically healthier). No, we do it because G-d commanded us to, nearly 4,000 years ago.

We're not shy about showing off our record as a people. Sure, we may stumble here and there as individuals, but when it comes to the big stuff, the things that truly matter, the Jewish people never disappoint. So, we say to You, our Father in Heaven: choose us again, and bless us with a good and sweet new year. We promise that we will prove ourselves worthy of the trust You place in us, year after year.