

A Message for Rosh Hashanah



As I put pen to paper, we have just entered the period known as the *Shiva D'Nechemta*, the Seven Weeks of Comfort following Tisha B'Av, yet our brothers and sisters face renewed hostility from the many enemies who continue to seek our destruction. The situation in Erets Yisrael is desperate and we pray continually for a peaceful outcome and an end to tragic loss of life.

There is an ancient, sacred work that has become quite popular in recent years called *Perek Shirah*. Some sources ascribe it to King David, who was inspired to write it after being told by a frog, as it were, that its "song" to G-d was loftier than David's own *Book of Psalms*. Others credit its authorship to the wisest of all men, King Solomon, who understood the "speech" of the many components of our

universe – animal, vegetable and mineral. Whoever its author, *Perek Shirah* has a place of honour in Jewish Liturgy and the Sages promise abundant blessing to those such as my wife and your Rebbetsin who recites it every day!

On reading this work, it is most interesting to note that the bat takes the words of its "song" from the first verse of the first *Haftorah* of these seven special weeks. The *Haftorah* begins, *Nachamu, nachamu, ami, yomar Elokechem*. "Be comforted, be comforted, My people, so says your G-d", and refers to the words of comfort offered to the Jewish people after the Temple was destroyed. Whilst it seems strange that the bat should choose these particular words as his "song" to the Almighty, there is great wisdom in his choice and a powerful lesson for us during this difficult time in these critical weeks approaching Rosh Hashanah.

Unlike other winged creatures, the bat does not fly to warmer climates in winter. Instead, it hibernates and huddles with other bats to share body warmth. It is this very behaviour that comforts the Jewish people in the bitter winter of exile. We do not flee from our heritage, nor do we isolate ourselves from our fellow Jew. Our Torah goes with us wherever we are

and we derive comfort and spiritual warmth from the unity we have created with our brethren.

Here in Hale, our community has grown steadily since its inception three decades ago and now provides a large "cave", an area of spiritual refuge and warmth that benefits over 350 families. In truth, though, we must always remember that our community only exists *because* of its members. The warmth comes not from the cave itself, but from the presence of those who dwell within it, huddling together, as it were. So this year, view Rosh Hashanah as a time to strengthen individual commitment to our community. Rather than expecting the community to be the *source* of the spiritual warmth, recognise the gift within: our own ability to be part of a greater whole. In this way, our community will continue to aspire to ever greater heights beginning in the year ahead.

Ruthie and I, together with our family, wish you and your loved ones a *Ktiva V'chatimah Tovah*. May we each find comfort and warmth from the unity we create by actively committing ourselves to the greater whole. Above all, may we be blessed with a year of health, happiness and peace in our beloved Erets Yisrael.