



יהי רצון מלפניך ה' אלהינו וא'להינו שתשלח מהרה רפואה שלמה מן השמים, רפואת הנפש ורפואת הגוף לפצועי המלחמה, ולנפגעי מעשי טרור ואנטישמיות בישראל ובכל מקום שהם - עם שאר חולי ישראל. אמן.

May HaShem protect our soldiers and the hostages; may He send Refu'ah Sh'leima to the many injured; may He console the bereaved families and all of Israel, may He end this war with success and peace for Medinat Yisrael and Klal Yisrael wherever they are.



נצבים-ויכר

פרקי אבות - פרק ה-ו

YERUSHALAYIM in/out times **NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH**

כ"ה אלול ה'תשפ"ד • September 27-28, '24

 **5:54PM** PLAG **5:14PM** •  **7:04PM** R' Tam **7:45PM**

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The Rosh Chodesh we don't announce

This Shabbat would have been Shabbat M'vorchim, except for the fact that we don't bench Rosh Chodesh Tishrei. Firstly, its being Rosh HaShana, the Rosh Chodesh aspect of the day is eclipsed, or fades into the background - or something like that. There is reference to the day being Rosh Chodesh in the Maftir we read and in the Musaf reference to the korbanot of the day. Another factor that inputs into not announcing R"Ch Tishrei in advance is the pasuk (T'hilim 81:4) - TIK-U BACHODESH SHOFAR BAKESEH L'YOM CHAGEINU. Blow the Shofar on the new moon, on the moon's covering, for our festival day. The word BAKESEH is related to L'CHASOT, to cover. Rosh HaShana is the only Torah Yom Tov on Rosh Chodesh when the Moon is covered (so to speak).

And another input is to avoid alerting the satan to our specific judgment day.

Bottom line: We don't announce Rosh Chodesh Tishrei on the Shabbat before it, as we do for all other months.

Ironically, the one molad that is not announced publicly - that of Tishrei - is the molad of greatest significance to our Calendar.

Rosh HaShana is set based on the molad of Tishrei.

The molad of Tishrei 5785 will be on Thursday (October 3rd), 3 hours, 21 minutes, 13 chalakim.

Rambam in Hilchot Kidush HaChodesh states that Rosh haShana (in our current Calendar) is fixed on the day of the molad of Tishrei.

There are four different situations when Rosh HaShana will be pushed to the day following the molad, but none of them apply this time. Rosh HaShana 5785 is on Thursday, the day of the molad of Tishrei. Simple and neat.

And...

5785 is a Shana P'shuta, a 12-month year - a one Adar year, because it is the 9th year of the current 19-year Lunar Cycle. (The 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th years of each cycle have the extra Adar.)

And third factor: Since RH 5786 will be on Tuesday (and Wednesday), 5785 needs an extra day (30 Marcheshvan) to end right before next Rosh HaShana.

5785 is a PEI-HEI-SHIN year-type. PEI for P'shuta. HEI for beginning on a Thursday. SHIN for being SHALEIM, with both Marcheshvan and Kislev having 30 days. SHANA TOVA UMTUKA!

Nitzavim- Vayeilech



case, Nitzavim will be read on its own on the Shabbat before RH, and Vayeilech will be read on Shabbat Shuva.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI (positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek:pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya - 3+3+14 p'sukim - 29:9-28

[P>29:9 (20)] Having so recently heard the frightful Tochacha and the curses that are invoked against those who betray G-d, Israel is understandably "nervous" about its future, to say the least. Nitzavim therefore, begins on the positive, reassuring note that we are ALL standing before G-d and entering again into a covenant with Him. These opening p'sukim call our attention to the "inclusiveness" of the People of Israel. We are made up of scholars and leaders, judges and functionaries, men, women, and children, converts, wood cutters and water gatherers (Ashkenazim and S'faradim, religious and secular, Mitnagdim and Chasidim).

STATS	Nitzavim	Vayeilech	N & V
of 54 sedras	51st	52nd	-
of 11 in D'varim	8th	9th	-
lines in a Torah	87	72	159
rank	52	53	(41)
Parshiyot	4	3	7
P'tuchot	1	2	3
S'tumot	3	1	4
P'sukim	40	30	70
rank (Torah/D'v)	53/10	54/11	(48)
Words	657	553	1210
rank	51/8	53/10	(42)
Letters	2575	2123	4698
rank	51/8	53/10	(39)
MITZVOT	0	2	2
positive	0	2	2
prohibitions	0	0	0

N & V are the two shortest sedras in the Torah, but their p'sukim are the two longest in the Torah. Look at the (hypothetical) rank of the combined N/V and notice the jump from p'sukim thru words to letters.

When Rosh HaShana is Thursday (Fri) or Shabbat (Sun), Nitzavim and Vayeilech are combined and Haazinu will be read on Shabbat Shuva.

When RH is Monday (Tue) or Tuesday (Wed), there will be a Shabbat between Yom Kippur and Sukkot on which Haazinu will be read. In that

But together they all stood to reaffirm their commitment to G-d. Jewish Unity has always been our strength, its lack, our greatest weakness.

SDT: Rav Aharon of Karlin pointed out that ATEM is made of the letters of the word EMET, truth. This, he said, is the only way to achieve LIFNEI HASHEM, standing before G-d.

SDT: The Alshich points out that the Torah describes the People as "all of you, before G-d", and then proceeds to delineate different types of Jews. Before G-d, we ARE all the same. Whatever differences might exist pale into insignificance in comparison with the fact that we are all G-d's creations. Differences become important from our perspective. We view some people as more valuable than others. But we really have no way to know how G-d views us. In His eyes we are all standing erect this day...

And there is more. The second three-pasuk set proclaims that it is not just the entire People of Israel who were alive at the time, who are making this covenant with G-d, it is also our ancestors to whom G-d made His special promises, and to the generations of Jews in the past AND the future, whose spirit (souls) were present at this covenant.

Perhaps this is the meaning of the prophecy to Avraham Avinu that his

descendants will be as countless as the stars of the heavens. Take the millions of Jews alive today, add the millions who have preceded us, add the - how many more? - future generations, and we can truly be called "without number". Nations that have come to an end, can be numbered. An eternal people cannot ever be counted.

As he has done several times before, Moshe Rabeinu presents both sides of the covenant with G-d before the People: You have been in Egypt and you are aware of their abominable practices and those of the other nations which you have encountered. Perhaps there is a rebellious individual among you who will turn from G-d and embrace another faith.

SDT: The phrase describing what we would today refer to as a "rotten apple" is SHORESH POREH ROSH V'LAANA, literally a poisonous root of gall and wormwood. The initial letters of this phrase rearrange to spell SHOFAR, the antidote to this negative facet of Jewish life. The Shofar must awaken the one who stray and start him on the path to T'shuva.

A person who turns to another religion will be severely punished, even if he thinks otherwise. These p'sukim are a miniature version of the Tochacha from last week.

The portion concludes with the

statement that there are mysteries of this world that are G-d's and there are revealed truths that belong to us and our children. Our challenge is to remain faithful to the Torah.

Rashi interprets this pasuk in the narrow context of the punishments presented in the previous p'sukim. However, this pasuk also has wide applications. In all areas of human knowledge - science, math, history... - there are mysteries and there are revealed truths. But remember, today's mysteries can be revealed tomorrow, next year... or never.

And/or we can apply the concept of the pasuk to things that happen in this world that we don't understand. Whether it is the classic, "TZADIK V'RA LO...", that righteous people sometimes have a very hard life, and wicked people seem to enjoy their lives, or whether it is coping with the death of a child ל"ג, or attempting to understand the SHO'AH, or the war with Hamas, and a myriad of things that strike us as unfair, things that prompt us to "question G-d" - for all of the above, this pasuk succinctly tells us that there are mysteries in this world that are understood by G-d only, and that (only) those He chooses to reveal to us, become ours to understand. This concept does not "answer" nagging questions, but it must become part of our belief system, because it is a truth that can

help us cope, and understand that we are not capable of understanding everything.

Levi - Second Aliya - 6 p'sukim - 30:1-6

[S>30:1 (10)] From the perspective of absolute justice, if we break our agreement with G-d, punishment should be swift and complete. But we could not survive such an existence. This portion of Nitzavim tells us that if (when) we break the covenant and are dispersed among the nations as punishment, all hope is not lost. We have the golden opportunity to return to G-d - and He will help the process along. This too becomes part of the agreement with G-d. The concepts of return in a physical and spiritual sense are intermingled in this portion.

The wayward Jew turning back towards HaShem and the Torah, and the Jew exiled to a distant land coming back to Israel are presented simultaneously. This represents the dual nature of T'shuva. What a wonderful opportunity beckons each Jew - and the Jewish People as a whole - in being given a second (and 3rd and 4th...) chance to live a true Torah life.

MITZVAnotes

Rambam and Sefer HaChinuch (and others?) do not count T'SHUVA per se among the 613 mitzvot. Sefer

HaCharedim, the SMA"K, and others do count T'SHUVA as one of TARYAG. There is no need to "justify" counting Repentance as one of the mitzvot in the Torah - The Torah commands, V'SHAVTA AD HASHEM ELOKECHA, And you shall return to HaShem, your G-d. But how do we explain the absence of T'shuva from some lists of mitzvot.

One can say that Rambam counts only specific, distinct mitzvot. A command which is all-inclusive, such as "Keep My mitzvot", "Be holy", "Be straightforward with G-d", is not numbered on its own, because it is really part of all mitzvot, rather than its own distinct mitzva. T'shuva can be viewed the same way. Part of the mitzva to Recite the Sh'ma is that if one does not, or does it without kavana, then he must repent his ways and say the Sh'ma properly. Part of the prohibition of speaking Lashon Hara is that if one does, then he must repent. More than T'shuva being its own mitzva, it is an add-on to all the others.

Or, we can look at T'shuva as a gift from G-d. He doesn't HAVE to command it. He just has to let it be possible. And we should jump at the opportunity. The Torah does not have to command us to breathe. We do it because it is essential to living. So is T'shuva. The Torah doesn't have to tell us to repent, just that we can and how to do it.

On the other hand, there is one aspect of T'shuva that IS counted by Rambam as a mitzva among the 613 - Vidui, verbal confession. This is a specific aspect of T'shuva that DOES "qualify" for the Rambam's count. And yet, as mentioned earlier, some mitzva-counters DO count T'shuva among the 613. Just know that whether T'shuva is numbered among the 613 or not, everyone agrees that it is an extremely important mitzva, always applicable - but especially at this time of year.

The last pasuk of this portion contains one of several ELULs, in the form of Rashei Teivot, initial letters. And G-d will circumcise ET L'VAVCHA V'ET L'VAV zar'echa, your heart and the heart of your children. Baal HaTurim actually says that this is why we say Slichot during Elul.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 4+4 p'sukim - 30:7-14

If we return to G-d, then G-d will rain the curses upon our enemies. We have only to be faithful to HaShem and keep His mitzvot, and all His blessings will be showered upon us. Again a "pitch" is made for T'shuva. And again. And the T'shuva should be completely sincere.

[S>30:11 (4)] But how can we hope to keep our part of the agreement? Is not the Torah so exalted and remote that a mere mortal has no chance of attain-

ing spiritual heights? The answer is eloquently stated in the famous words of the Torah - **For this mitzva is not in the heavens nor is it across the ocean.** It is so very close and attainable that every Jew can feel confident in taking up its challenges. It is up to us to make the commitment, feel it in our hearts, and ACT upon it.

This idea applies, on one level, to T'shuva - T'shuva being the topic of the immediately preceding passage. But it can also apply to all the mitzvot - the whole Torah. The Torah was given to us. It is accessible to us all.

R'VI'I - Fourth Aliya - 6+3+3 p'sukim - 30:15-31:6

The fourth Aliya is ALWAYS the bridge between the two parts of a double sedra

[S>30:15 (6)] The concept of Free Will is beautifully expressed in the concluding portion of Nitzavim. It marks the difference between human beings and all other creations. The sun and the moon "fulfill" G-d's commands without conscious decisions. A bee doesn't think things out and decide to pollinate a flower. Nor does a lion attacking a weak zebra evaluate the morality of his act. Only humans have the choice to do good or evil. G-d recommends and pleads (so to speak) with us to choose Life and Good, but He leaves the choice to us. That is why we are accountable for our actions;

and that is why we stand before G-d in judgment on Rosh HaShana - animals do not. The choice is offered, but not only does G-d "command" us to choose Life, He warns us again of the devastating results of the wrong choice. Heavens and Earth are called upon to witness this most significant fact of human existence. It is the Land of Israel that is the "prize" for choosing wisely, as G-d had promised Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. G-d reconfirms His covenant and promises to us.

We have Free Will. We can be whatever kind of people we choose to be. We have His recommendation and encouragement to choose Life over Death, Good over Evil. Our proper choices will earn us long life and a firm hold on the Land that He promised our ancestors.

Let us heed the warnings of Nitzavim; let us be inspired by the beautiful challenges of Nitzavim; let us be uplifted by the lofty messages of Nitzavim; and let us have a "successful" Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, and a happy & healthy year of peace & prosperity. It is no mere coincidence that Nitzavim ALWAYS is read on the final Shabbat of the year, right before Rosh HaShana.

[P>31:1 (6)] Moshe Rabeinu concludes his words to the People and tells them that at his age of 120 years, he is no longer able to lead them.

And that G-d has told Moshe that he will not be crossing the Jordan River,

so his journey is truly over. He tells them that G-d will be with them, destroy the nations that they will encounter in Eretz Yisrael, and that Yehoshua will be the one to lead them. Moshe reminds the People of the victories they have had, and tells them to be strong and courageous. G-d won't abandon them (us).

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 3+4 p'sukim - 31:7-13

[S>31:7 (7)] Moshe then speaks to Yehoshua in front of the assembled people, and asks him to be strong, for he will be leading the people and he will be in charge of conquering and settling the Land. G-d will be guiding you "every step of the way".

When Moshe finished writing the Torah, he gave it over to the Kohanim, the carriers of the Ark.

Moshe next commands the People concerning the mitzva of HAK-HEL [612, A16 31:12]. On Sukkot following a Sh'mita year, when the people gather in Jerusalem for the Chag, the king shall read (parts of) the Torah to the multitude. The people are to gather at the Beit HaMikdash - men, women, and children - in order to learn, to fear G-d, to hear and understand, and to commit to fulfill all the teachings of the Torah. And the youngsters who have not yet learned, will hear and learn to revere G-d "all the days they shall live in the Land you are about to enter."

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 6 p'sukim - 31:14-19

[P>31:14 (17)] G-d calls to Moshe to take Yehoshua and appear with him at the OHEL MOED. G-d's Presence descended to the Tent in the form of a Cloud.

G-d tells Moshe that after his death, the people will rebel against Him, stray from the proper path, and embrace other gods. G-d announces that He will show His anger by "hiding His Face" from them. This is a reference to HESTER PANIM which manifests itself as G-d "working behind the scenes" only, in hidden, subtle ways.

This prophecy by no means "obligates" that generation, or any generation, to turn to idolatry. It is possible for the prophecy never to come true. And this would not impugn the truth of Torah or Moshe's status as a prophet. We always have the challenge not to turn away from G-d, and the ability to remain faithful to Him.

Next is the command to write "The Song" (namely the whole Torah), to teach it to the people, so that it should serve as a testament among the People of Israel. This is the last mitzva of the Torah [613, A18 31:19] (according to Sefer HaChinuch), to write a Sefer Torah.

MITZVAnotes

Our Sages include in this mitzva the significance of acquiring Sifrei Kodesh (holy books) from which to learn, study and teach Torah. Since the Torah itself specifies that the "purpose" of writing a Torah scroll is to learn and teach from it, then writing, buying, acquiring all learning texts would be in the spirit of this mitzva.

The RO"Sh (Rabeinu Asher) takes this idea one significant step further - he says that since in our day, the Torah scroll has been relegated to the Aron Kodesh in shul and is used for public reading, but no longer as a teaching text - the MAIN fulfillment of this mitzva "to write a Sefer Torah" is the building of a personal Torah library (that will be used). Buy Torah texts from which to learn and teach. He adds that it is also praiseworthy if one is privileged to write a Sefer Torah as well. This is an unusual turn-about, which emphasizes the importance of buying s'farim - AND USING THEM.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 5+6 p'sukim - 31:20-30

Because, G-d explains, I am bringing the people to a Land flowing with milk & honey, the People will eat in contentment and turn from G-d. The

Torah, however, will not be completely forgotten from the lips (and hearts) of future generations. (This will be "their ticket back".) Moshe wrote the Torah on that day (Rambam says that he wrote 13 Torahs - one for each tribe and one in the care of the Kohanim/Leviyim) and taught it to the People. G-d "commanded" Yehoshua to be strong and courageous in his new role as leader. Moshe completed the writing of the Torah.

(Some say that Moshe even wrote the final 8 p'sukim of the Torah, which discuss his death; others disagree and say that Yehoshua wrote those verses.)

Moshe commands the Leviyim to take the Torah and place it at the side of the Aron.

(Some say that the Torah was in the Aron; others say that it was on a shelf attached to the side of the Aron.)

Moshe asks for the leaders of the People to assemble for his final words to them. Moshe tells of the prophecy/prediction of the rebelliousness of the People. Moshe speaks the words of the Song - here probably referring to Haazinu - to all the people, in its entirety.

The last 3 p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

Haftara - 23 p'sukim - Yeshayahu 61:10-63:9

Seventh and final of the Haftarot of Consolation. Yeshayahu prophesies of when there will be universal peace and Jerusalem will not only be rebuilt, but will be the center of universal worship of G-d. Not only will the nations of the world recognize The One G-d, they will also acknowledge the People of Israel as His People. The idea of universal acceptance of G-d fits with our notion that ALL people are judged by G-d on Rosh HaShana, not just the Jews.

Bringing the Prophets to Life

**Weekly insights into the Haftara
by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler**

Author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)

Moving Forward... to the Past

**Nitzavim-Vayeilech - 23 p'sukim
Yeshayahu 61:10-63:9**

This week's haftara, the final one of the seven prophecies of consolation (SHEV D'N'CHEMTA), closes the post-Tish'a b'Av period of comfort that is also designed to repair our relationship with G-d. By doing so, this haftara series of solace and repair has clearly prepared us for the time of T'shuva - the season specific-

ally reserved for our return to the Creator. But this week's haftara selection also effects a powerful response to Moshe Rabbeinu's tragic prediction of the future destruction of our land - as detailed in this week's parsha. For, while the Torah warns of the complete devastation of the land, leaving it desolate with bleak hope for its future, the haftara foresees a time when UL-ARTZEICH LO YEI'AMEIR OD SH'MAMA - "your land will no longer be considered desolate (or deserted). Likewise, as pointed out by Rav Yehuda Shaviv, our parasha describes the time of return with the words V'SHAV HASHEM ELOKECHA, which our Rabbis (Megila 29.) understand as stating that G-d Himself would suffer in the galut together WITH His nation and, consequently, will return WITH them (V'SHAV) from the exile. Indeed, that very thought is echoed in the closing words of the haftara when the prophet exclaims: B'TZORATAM LO TZAR, "He (Hashem) suffers with them in their pain."

The essential message of this reading, however, is that of the joy of Israel that will experience upon her redemption from galut and, with that, her ability to reestablish of that loving relationship she once had with G-d. SOS ASIS BASHEM - the very opening words of the haftara - reflect the entire theme of Yishayahu's divine message - that Israel will

rejoice in G-d as do a bride and groom rejoice in their relationship. The coming geula promises Hashem's protection of a rebuilt Zion and His establishment of the Holy City as a light of justice to the nations. In the first perek of Sefer Yishayahu, one that we read on the Shabbat before Tish'a b'Av, the navi described Yerushalayim as a city filled with crime and corruption, as a dishonest and unprincipled place that had abandoned justice and righteousness. In this week's reading, Yishayahu brings us full circle back to the sinless time when G-d shed His light and His favor upon Israel by promising that, once again, G-d will "wrap" our nation in righteousness (ME'IL TZ'DAKA Y'ATANI) and Jerusalem would never again be abandoned (IR LO NE'EZAVA).

It is my firm belief that this message of return and repair is a crucial one for this, the Shabbat before Rosh HaShana. As we focus upon self-judgment and self-improvement, we must realize that the glorious future promised by our nevi'im is not one that would arrive through Hashem's "efforts" alone. Certainly, we remember that G-d is a loving Father who wishes to draw us nearer to Him and establish once more the close and devoted relationship that we had with Him in the past. But it is essential that the desired future, those promised

prophecies, can be realized only when we return to the basics - and that means not only returning to G-d Himself, but also returning to each other, to every one of our people. The horrors of this past year must teach us that we ARE one and that we NEED each other. And only in that way, can we see our plea to G-d to proclaimed "renew our days as those we once had in the past."

Or, as Megilat Eicha puts it: CHADEISH YAMEINU K'KEDEM ★



ParshaPix
explanations



The fun way to go over the weekly sedra with your children, grandchildren, Shabbat guests

Ki Tavo

<#> one Unexplained for you and one private one for me (which I will share the details of next week IYH

The logo of NBC's TODAY show is for the emphasis the Torah places on HAYOM HAZEH, this very day. Torah and Mitzvot should not be looked at as once-upon-a-time-a-long-time-ago, but rather as a new exciting experience as if one receives the Torah anew, this very day - TODAY

The forty-three, as I said last week, was for me. My family and I came on Aliya 43 years ago, on the midweek (i.e. Wednesday) between KI TEITZEI MEI-ARTZOT HABRIT and KI TAVO EL

HAARETZ. Last week Monday was the English date of our Aliya, Friday was the Hebrew date, and Wednesday was that significant (for us) MITVOCH

NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH



Family in upper-left represents the beginning of Nitzavim that describes all who are standing today before G-d. Included are men, women, and children <#> 11 dots above the family are for the sofer's practice of writing dots above the words LANU ULVANEINU <#> all types of people, including the woodcutter (George Washington, as in the cherry tree) and the water-drawers (Jack & Jill) <#> The family also stands for those

who were to participate in HAK-HEL - men, women, and children ; HAK-HEL is also represented by the crowned Torah-reader - the king <#> He's in a Sukka because HAK-HEL is on Sukkot following a Sh'mita year <#> The sofer writing a sefer Torah is for the mitzva to write a Sefer Torah <#> This mitzva is also represented by the bookshelf of Sifrei Kodesh, since acquiring S'farim to learn from is also part of the mitzva <#> Xed out sky scene is for LO BASHAMAYIM HI (not like the English hi, but like hee), it is not in heaven... (referring to the whole Torah an/or the Mitzva of T'shuva) <#> Acid rain symbol is for the punishment for turning away from G-d <#> S is for Sulfur, NaCl is for salt, and the triangle is the symbol of heat - GOFRIT VAMELECH S'REIFA... <#> Megila is for the hidden "clue" to Esther in the Torah - HESTEIR PANIM <#> The fork in the road is for the choice of choosing Life or Death, Good or Evil <#> Chatan & Kalla under the Chupa is from the haftara <#> Musical notes are for HASHIRA, the Song, which is a poetic way the Torah refers to the Torah <#> Shofar is for the RASHEI TEIVOT of the phrase SHORESH POREH ROSH V'LAANA, a reference to bad people among us - in the "warnings of Nitzavim" ; YO-YO, a RETURNING top, is for T'SHUVA, return. Specifically, the fact that a person can stray and sin, return, stray again, return, and again and

again... and G-d is still eager (so to speak) for the T'SHUVA rather than punishing the person. The Yo-yo keeps coming back too. But beware: if the string breaks, the yo-yo keeps getting further and further away and return is very much more difficult <#> red man is for Nitzavim (standing), and the green man is for Vayeilech (going) ; the Sifrei Torah (Ashkenazi and S'faradi) are for the repeated references to 'this Sefer Torah' <#> the milk and honey is for... you guessed it. But the reference in Vayielech is different from the standard - how? <#> there are a whole bunch of Unexplaineds

לע"נ

הרב יעקב צבי ב"ר דוד אריה ז"ל
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

Leadership: Consensus or Command?

Nitzavim-Vayeilech

The great transition is about to take place. Moshe's career as a leader is coming to an end, and Yehoshua's leadership is about to begin. Moshe blesses his successor. Then God does. Listen carefully to what they say, and to the subtle difference between. This is what Moshe says:

"Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land

that the Lord swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance" (D'varim 31:7).

And this is what God says:

"Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I Myself will be with you" (31:23).

The difference in Hebrew is even slighter than it is in English. Moshe uses the verb TAVO, "go with". God uses the verb TAVI, "bring". It is the slightest of nuances, but Rashi tells us the words are worlds apart in their significance. They refer to two utterly different styles of leadership. Here is Rashi's comment:

Moshe said to Yehoshua, "Make sure that the elders of the generation are with you. Always act according to their opinion and advice." However, the Holy One blessed be He said to Yehoshua, "For you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them" - meaning, "Bring them even against their will. It all depends on you. If necessary, take a stick and beat them over the head. There is only one leader for a generation, not two." (Rashi on 31:7)

Moshe advises his successor to lead by consultation and consensus. God tells Yehoshua to lead firmly and with authority. Even if people do not agree with you, He counsels him, you must lead from the front. Be clear. Be

decisive. Be forceful. Be strong.

Now this is a strange comment from Rashi, considering what we learned elsewhere about the leadership styles, respectively, of God and Moshe. Listen first to the comment of Rashi on the words of God immediately prior to the creation of humanity: "Let Us make man in our image after our likeness" (B'reishit 1:26). Who are the "Us"? To whom is God speaking and why? Rashi says:

From here we learn the humility of God. Since man was [created] in the image of the angels, they might become jealous of him. He, therefore, consulted them. Similarly, when He judges Kings, He consults His heavenly court ... Though they [the angels] did not help in his creation and [the wording of the verse] may give the heretics an opportunity to rebel, [nevertheless,] Scripture does not refrain from teaching courtesy and the attribute of humility, that the greater should consult and ask permission of the smaller (B'reishit Rabba 8:9). (Rashi on B'reishit 1:26)

This is a remarkable statement. Rashi is saying that, before creating man, God consulted with the angels. He did so not because He needed their help: clearly He did not. Nor was it because He needed their advice: He had already resolved to create humankind. It was to show them respect, to pre-empt their jealousy of man, to

avoid their resentment at not being consulted on so fateful a decision, and to show us - the readers - the fundamental truth that greatness goes hand in hand with humility. So it was God who acted according to the advice Moshe gave Yehoshua: "Make sure that others are with you. Consult. Take their advice."

On the other hand, Moshe acted the way God advised Yehoshua to do. "If necessary, take a stick and beat them over the head." Is that not figuratively what Moshe did at Kadesh, when he hit the people with his words and the rock with his staff (Bamidbar 20:1-12), for which he was condemned by God not to enter the Promised Land?

So we seem to have God saying words we associate with Moshe's type of leadership - firm, strong, decisive - and Moshe advocating the kind of leadership - consensual, consultative - that Rashi associates with God. Surely it should have been the other way around.

However, perhaps Rashi is telling us something profound. At the end of his life, Moshe recognised one great failure of his leadership. He had taken the Israelites out of Egypt, but he had not taken Egypt out of the Israelites. He had changed his people's fate, but he hadn't changed their character.

He now realised that for this to happen there would have to be a

different kind of leadership, one that handed back responsibility to the people as a whole, and to the elders in particular.

So long as there is a Moshe performing miracles, the people do not have to accept responsibility for themselves. In order for them to grow, Yehoshua would have to engage in participative leadership, encouraging diverse views and listening to them, even if that meant going more slowly.

That is transformative leadership and it requires the leader to engage in what the kabbalists called *tsimtsum*, self-effacement.

Or as Rashi puts it: "Make sure that the elders of the generation are with you. Always act according to their opinion and advice" (Rashi to D'varim 31:7).

As for God, He was not changing His mind. He was not suggesting that Yehoshua should become, in general, an authoritarian leader. He was suggesting that Yehoshua needed to do this just once. Listen carefully to the verse: "For you will bring the Israelites into the land" (D'varim 31:23). Recall that there was one occasion that condemned an entire generation to die in the wilderness - the episode of the spies, in which the people lacked the faith and courage to enter and take possession of the land.

It was then that two men - Yehoshua

and Kalev - stood firm, insisting against the other 10 spies, that they could conquer the land and defeat their enemies. God was saying to Yehoshua, that there will be one future trial in which you must stand firm, even against the majority, and that will come when you are about to cross the Jordan. That is when the people are in danger of giving way to fear.

That is when your leadership will consist, not in consultation and consensus, but in allowing no dissent. That is when "it will all depend on you ... There is only one leader for a generation, not two." Sometimes even the most consensual leaders must lead from the front and bring the people with them.

There is a time to discuss and a time to act, a time to seek agreement and a time to move ahead without waiting for agreement. That is what both God and Moshe were telling Yehoshua in their different ways.

A leader must have the courage to lead, the patience to consult, and the wisdom to know when the time is right for each.

Around the Shabbat Table:

- (1) What do you think are the main differences between the leadership styles of Moshe and Yehoshua?**
- (2) Why do you think the incident of**

the spies was so formative for Yehoshua's leadership?

- (3) What are some unique traits that you embody that would contribute to strong leadership?

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

Message from the Parsha

Rabbi Katriel (Kenneth) Brander

Not in the Heavens

From ancient times to today, Jewish tradition has emphasized the importance of human engagement with the divine words of Torah and its continuity. This concept is rooted in this week's parsha, which reminds us that Torah is not "up in the heavens" or "across the ocean", but is in fact, "very close to us, wherever we may find ourselves" (D'varim 30:11-14).

This approach is demonstrated exceptionally well in the teachings and life of the Vilna Gaon, one of the greatest Talmudic scholars of all time. His student, Rav Chayim of Volozhin, recounts how the Vilna Gaon would refuse divine assistance from maggidim (celestial beings) in his own Torah studies, stating:

I do not want that my knowledge of God's Torah be communicated by any type of medium. Only what my eyes should be able to perceive [the

wisdom of Torah] according to what God wishes to reveal to me [through my studies]. God should give me a portion in His Torah through my toils, struggles which I pursue with all my strength. (Introduction to Sifra diZeni'uta of Rav Chaim of Volozhin)

For the Vilna Gaon, the essence of Torah is now in the hands of mankind, with God's wisdom and words sanctified through our own discovery.

The Talmud further reinforces this notion of human authority, albeit within established protocols of our Tradition. In the famed story of 'the oven of Achnai', (Bava Metzia 59b) the sages push the bounds of these verses even further, insisting that these verses are not merely about accessibility to Torah, but about who has authority over Torah. When R' Eliezer enlists the help not only of miracles and wonders, but even of a BAT KOL, a heavenly voice, to demonstrate that his interpretation of the Halacha is correct, his interlocutor, R' Yehoshua declares "it is not in the heavens!" This bold statement asserts that the authority to interpret and apply Torah has been entrusted to humans.

This trust and authority to interpret and reapply Torah goes beyond just studying and observing Jewish laws. When we have knowledge of the halachic theorems which Jewish ideals and law are predicated upon,

God entrusts us to take part in crafting the Torah to engage in every generation, demonstrating God's desire for partnership with us in building up new levels of Torah, guaranteeing the immortality of our covenantal relationship. Particularly in the face of new and emerging challenges that arise over the course of human and Jewish history, God seeks out our active participation in the development of the Torah.

In fact, it is in the face of new challenges that this responsibility becomes especially crucial. This past year, we have witnessed and experienced unprecedented circumstances that have required innovative halachic thinking as poskim and as a people. How should Shabbat observance be managed, with soldiers, doctors, social workers, and so many others required to move from one place to another, in what is now the second longest war in the country's history? Am I allowed to travel back home from telling a family that their soldier son was killed in battle, if Shabbat has already begun? Can I eat kosher food that was brought to the base by a family that traveled on Shabbat? How do I search for chametz before Pesach if there are soldiers who keep such foods with them in our barracks? What are our obligations and prioritizations towards charitable giving, with thousands of Israelis still wounded,

displaced, emotionally scarred, laid off, and grieving?

These and so many more questions I have heard over the last year aren't directly addressed in the canon we've inherited, leaving it to us, with God's permission and help found in the rabbinic literature, to forge new pathways in Torah as we face realities that are directly related to the messianic age. We continue this work daily. While this opportunity arises from tragedy, it simultaneously demonstrates the beauty of the enduring relevance and eternity of our Torah traditions, and how they hold a message for every generation.

The final words in Talmud regarding the oven of Achnai incident are as follows:

Years after, Rabbi Natan encountered Eliyahu the prophet and said to him: What did the Holy One, Blessed be He, do at that time, when Rabbi Yehoshua issued his declaration [that we don't follow the word of God in heaven]? Eliyahu said to him: The Holy One, Blessed be He, smiled and said: NITZCHUNI BANAI NITZCHUNI BANAI.

These final words can be translated in one of two ways. The first is that "My children have triumphed over Me; My children have triumphed over Me." Indeed our parsha reminds us that the axiom of rabbinic protocols takes

precedence over divine pronouncements. Or that final comment can be translated “My children have immortalized Me; My children have immortalized Me.” Reading it this way, we see how by taking responsibility for the development of the Torah we help guarantee its immortality and the future of our covenant with the Divine.

As we approach a new cycle of Torah reading after the holidays this year, we hope for resolution to the many halachic dilemmas, the return of our hostages, calming of tensions, and healing for our people. Through our continued engagement with Torah, may we fulfill our role as partners with God in bringing more light into our world.

Walk through the Parsha

with **Rabbi David Walk**



Nitzavim-Vayeilech

RETURN TO WHERE YOU ONCE BELONGED

Nu, what do you say when everything's been said? Well, you say it again. Rav Soloveitchik based his famous T'SHUVA addresses on the Rambam's Laws of T'SHUVA, and he used to say that he knew that they had covered this ground before, but there is no study session which

doesn't uncover new insights (EIN BEIT MEDRASH B'LI CHIDUSH). Well, I hope that I can discover a new insight when analyzing a couple of verses we read on the Shabbat before Rosh HaShana every year.

Here are the three verses I will endeavor to clarify:

When you shall experience all these things - the blessing and the curse that I have set before you-and you shall reflect (HASHEIVOTA) among the various nations to which your God the Eternal has banished you, and you turn back (V'SHAVTA) to your God the Eternal, and you and your children heed God's command with all your heart and soul, just as I enjoin upon you this day, then your God the Eternal will restore (V'SHAV) your fortunes and take you back in love. [God] will bring you together again from all the peoples where your God the Eternal has scattered you. (D'varim 30:1-3).

These verses are hard to translate, because the critical word in this section is the Hebrew word SHAVA. Now what does that word mean? Well, normally we would say 'return', but in the translation above it is rendered: reflect, turn back, and restore. It's a conundrum.

The translation of HASHEIVOTA as 'reflect' comes from Rav Aryeh Kaplan. He suggests both here and

earlier in chapter 4 that when the word SHAVA is used with 'you heart' (L'VAVECHA) it is referring to the intellectual princess of reflection. It suggests turning inward to contemplate, because in the ancient world the heart was usually considered the seat of intellect, not emotion.

Also, the word SHAVA is used as both an active verb of bringing an item back, as in HASHAVAT AVEIDA (bring back a lost object). But it is also used widely as the verb for repenting, a return from the realm of sin.

So, is our little section about a physical return or a spiritual return?

Well, both.

The Netziv points out that the physical return to Eretz Yisrael is also a spiritual enterprise, because part of the reason for the return is to perform Mitzvot. After all, a majority of Mitzvot can only be performed in the Holy Land. Therefore we cannot separate the physical return from the spiritual return.

Even though I appreciate the Netziv's point, I must state unequivocally that for me the process of making ALIYA is a most spiritual task. I will never forget landing at Ben Gurion Airport as an OLEH CHADASH. I know that we usually translate OLEH as 'immigrant', but I felt much more like a pilgrim. I wasn't becoming a stranger in a strange land; I was

coming HOME.

We have clear references to an ingathering of exiles in our verses. This entails a most physical act or movement, but the discussion of returning in or of the heart sounds much more like T'SHUVA, repentance. It seems that because of our firm and ancient connection to Eretz Yisrael, we cannot separate physical return from spiritual return.

The next problem to discuss is whether the emphasis in our verses is one of an individual's 'return' or a national ingathering. Again, I think that the answer is both.

All of the appearances of the verb SHAVA are in the singular. But we could be addressing the nation, which would require a singular verb. On the other hand, the discussion of reflection in one's heart does sound like the behavior of an individual.

The Ramban makes a valiant effort to place our verses into a historical framework. He discusses the return of the Ten Lost Tribes preceding another ingathering of the tribes of Yehuda and Binyamin. He views the entirety of our section as a detailed prophecy about the Messianic Age. All the references are to concrete historical or future events. I find his undertaking fascinating, but not convincing. My biggest problem with his explanation is his insistence that Ten Tribes must return before the

two tribes, but we already had a return of the two tribes under Ezra and Nechemia. Does that major event not count?

When all is said and done I find myself in a quandary. I love the idea that our nation's future redemption is being foretold and promised. On the other hand, I usually apply these verses to my private, personal struggle to do T'SHUVA every year, and I'm thankful to read this as part of my High Holiday effort to improve.

I think Rabbi Yehuda Amital z"l also struggled with this issue, and in 2004 during the second Intifada came up with, I believe, a powerful approach to the issue. He explained that through most Jewish history, people primarily thought about their own safety and spiritual efforts on the Days of Awe, but:

This year (2004) especially, we are in a period in which our concern is not for our own personal survival. In Israel we aren't worried about "What will happen to me?" Our main worry is: What will happen to Am Yisrael? What will happen to the State of Israel? In such a period, a person thinks: When there are such great worries, what does it matter if I'm a little better or a little worse? Is that really the issue - my personal problems? There are huge national problems! ... The final redemption is an exalted level, but first there is the

redemption on the everyday level. We, with our personal t'shuva, are doing something for all of Israel. Our t'shuva is not cut off from what is happening to Am Yisrael; it is all connected! Therefore, our personal introspection is not divorced from national concerns. It represents, in fact, active participation in the issues and concerns of the nation as a whole. Let us pray to God that He give us the strength to remedy our faults and to return to Him wholeheartedly. May the Holy One send forgiveness, pardon and atonement to us and to all of Israel, and inscribe both Am Yisrael and each one of us for a good year.

You see, the ambiguity in our verses gives us the power to decide where our spiritual emphasis must lie. Most years we just work on ourselves, but in times like these that's not enough. Let us all resolve to dedicate this year's T'SHUVA effort to the safety and success of our people both here in Eretz Yisrael and throughout the world! 🕊️

Rav Kook Torah

by Rabbi

Chanan Morrison • www.ravkooktorah.com



Two Levels of T'shuva

The Torah portion of Nitzavim is always read before Rosh HaShana (with or without Vayeilech), a fitting time to speak about reflection and

repentance. Often we have a strong desire to make changes in our lives. We may want to be better parents, better spouses, and better people. We aspire to greater spirituality in our lives, to devote more time to Torah study, to be more thoughtful in our interpersonal relationships. And yet, circumstances may make such resolutions very difficult to keep. Our goals may seem unattainable, and our personality faults beyond correction.

National T'shuva

The Torah describes the national t'shuva (repentance) of the Jewish people as they return to their homeland and their faith:

“Among the nations where the Lord your God has banished you, you will reflect on the situation. Then you will return up to the Lord your God... He will gather you from among the nations... and bring you to the land that your ancestors possessed.

God will remove the barriers from your hearts... and you will repent and obey God, keeping all of His commandments... For you will return to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul” (D'varim 30:1-10).

Twice, the verse states that “You will return to God.” Is there a purpose to this repetition? A careful reading reveals a slight discrepancy between the two phrases.

After reflection in the exile, the Jewish people will return to the land of their fathers. Here the text says, V'SHAVTA AD HASHEM ELOKECHA – “you will return UP TO God”, using the Hebrew word AD.

After returning to the Land of Israel and God removes the barriers of their hearts, they will learn to fully love God and keep His commandments. This time the Torah says, KI TASHUV EL HASHEM – “you will return to God”, using the preposition EL.

Two Stages of T'shuva

How are these two types of national return different? What is the difference between AD and EL?

The first t'shuva is the physical return to their homeland, to their language, and to their national essence. This is returning “up to God” – approaching, but not fully attaining. Thus the Torah uses the preposition AD, indicating a state of “up to, but not included in the category” (a Talmudic expression, AD V'LO AD BICHLAL). This is a genuine yet incomplete repentance, obscured by many veils.

After this initial return, the Jewish people will merit Divine assistance that “will remove the barriers from your hearts”. This will enable the people to achieve the second stage of return, a full, complete t'shuva, all the way “to God”. This is an all-embracing return to God “with all your heart

and soul”.

Thoughts of T'shuva

It is important to recognize and appreciate these different levels of t'shuva. This lesson is also true on a personal level. We should value even partial efforts to change and improve. The Sages praised even HIRHUREI T'SHUVA, the mere desire to improve (Pesikta Rabbati 44). Perhaps we are unable to fulfill our spiritual ambitions to the extent we like. Nonetheless, we should view our desire to change and improve as tools that purify and sanctify, leading us on our way to attaining complete spiritual elevation.

Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 339-341. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah vol. I p. 335; Orot HaT'shuva 17:2

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

The Greatness of T'shuva Nitzavim

The Sages in Sanhedrin 99a taught:

"The place occupied by the penitent cannot be attained even by the completely righteous."

How could it be that a ba'al teshuva is greater than a tzadik?

The Groom's Clothes

Jack was a peddler from a small village. Jack's son, a bright and talented young man, caught the eye of a young lady from an extremely affluent family. Despite the vast differences in social status and wealth, the woman's father liked the hardworking young man and approved of the match.

When the time came close for the wedding, the bride's father approached Jack with a request. 'Please buy your son a proper suit, so that when he comes to my city for the wedding celebration he will look respectable.'

Jack readily agreed, and took his son to a local clothing shop in the village to buy him a nice suit.

The evening before the wedding, Jack and his family arrived in the city, and took a room in a local hotel. The following morning, the father of the bride together with his friends went to greet his future son-in-law. But they were surprised to find a great commotion in the hotel. What happened?

Jack was so upset that he could barely speak. Agitated and shaken, he pointed to the broken lock on the door. In the middle of the night, thieves had broken into their hotel room, stealing their luggage, clothes,

and other possessions. "Even the new suit which I bought my son for the wedding is gone", Jack wailed. "This is a catastrophe!"

The wealthy father of the bride put his arm on Jack's shoulders. "Don't let this trouble you at all. Don't worry about the loss; I will make it up to you." He then told his butler to take Jack and his son to the finest stores in town and buy them suitable clothes for the wedding.

After the wedding, the wealthy man organized a reception for his friends and neighbors, and he seated his new in-laws at the head of the table. Yet people noticed that Jack looked unhappy. A good friend of the bride's family took Jack aside. "This should be a time of great joy for you. You just married off your son to a wonderful family. Why are you upset?"

"Why shouldn't I be upset?" replied Jack. "Didn't you hear what happened to us in the hotel, how thieves stole our clothes, including the new suit that I purchased for my son?"

"Why should that bother you so? Did not the bride's father buy splendid clothes for all of you?"

"True - but why should I have to resort to gifts? I had prepared everything myself!"

At this point, the friend smiled. "Fool! You have no idea what a favor that thief did for you! You thought you bought a good suit for your son, and probably in your village it would have been considered very appropriate. But here in the big city, people have very sophisticated tastes. They would have laughed at that suit!"

"But now that the thief stole everything and his father-in-law bought new clothes for everyone, your son was dressed in style, even according to the standards of our city. So this was the best possible outcome for you!"

The Tzadik and the Ba'al T'shuva

The tzadik fills his bags with valuable objects - a lifetime of good deeds, prayers, Torah learning and mitzvot. After 120 years in this world, he takes his collection of 'valuables' to the heavenly court, where each object is taken out and examined.

The angels scrutinize each one. "Tell me, this you call Torah Lishmah, Torah studied for its own sake?" "You think that this counts as a prayer recited with a pure heart?" "And this you call a mitzva?" There is no end to measuring the quality and intentions of good deeds.

But the repentant ba'al t'shuva arrives at the heavenly court in tears. "How could I have wasted my time in

the world? How could I have lost my days, spending them in worthless pursuits?"

Then the Holy One Himself makes for him new 'clothes', as it says, "Great is T'shuva, for it transforms sins into merits." The spiritual clothes that God makes for the ba'al t'shuva are certainly of the highest, purest quality. Like the new clothes that the wealthy man bought for his son-in-law, no one will find what to criticize.

This is what the Sages meant when they taught that, "The place occupied by the penitent cannot be attained even by the completely righteous."

Adapted from Mishlei Yaakov, pp. 463-464

The Daily Portion **- Sivan Rahav Meir**

Standing Tall

Translation by Yehoshua Siskin

During a most challenging week, we approach the final Shabbat of the year. And what is the message of the double Torah portion of this week? **STAND TALL.**

The Torah reading opens with "You are standing today, all of you..." Despite all your trials and hardships, you are unwavering and never weaken, forcefully standing tall with confidence.

Midrash Tanchuma comments as follows: "Even though these curses come upon you, they stand you up. Even though these afflictions come upon you, you are still standing. It is therefore stated: 'You are standing today, all of you.'"

In other words, all hardships are temporary and you have succeeded – and will continue to succeed – in standing up to every trial. And there is more. The expression CHAZAK VE'EMATZ (be strong and courageous) appears three times in the parasha. We are given a blessing for strength and courage when facing our enemies. Upon entering the Land of Israel, Moshe declares that we are not alone in our fight against these enemies since God is on our side: "Be strong and courageous! Neither fear, nor be dismayed of them, for the Lord, your God He is the One Who goes with you. He will neither fail you, nor forsake you."

The parasha reminds us that these days are an opportunity to return to ourselves, individually and as a nation. This is the time to recognize our potential for greater wisdom, faith, deterrence, initiative, and unity.

On a national level - to take care of the north and south so that it will be quiet, and on a personal level - to make sure each of us knows our purpose.

May we merit to stand tall with confidence and joyfulness, and may we merit all the blessings in this week's parasha.

To receive Sivan Rahav-Meir's daily WhatsApp: tiny.cc/DailyPortion

From the Writings of
Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher z"l

T'SHUVA - Going BACK to the Future

There was a cute movie in 1985 with the Jewish actor Michael J. Fox called "Back to the Future". This is exactly what the T'shuva process is all about. Through T'shuva we can reset the clock by actually changing our sinful past.

The Rambam states that T'shuva consists of a 4-step process where we have the awesome opportunity to erase our sins and wipe away the evil resulting from our past transgressions. This is done through the following procedure.

Cease and desist from our sinful behavior.

Feel deep regret, shame, and remorse over our particular sin.

A verbal confession to G-d describing our sin.

Honestly and truthfully resolve never to commit that particular sin again.

This T'shuva process has the incredible power to totally erase our sin and restore the sinner to his spiritual level prior to the sin. In fact the Talmud in Yoma 86 states that if one does T'shuva only because of his love of G-d and not for any ulterior motive, then that sin actually and wondrously becomes a Merit for the person!

The Talmud Peshachim 54 makes an astonishing statement that T'shuva's creation pre-dates the creation of the universe! The ability to go back in time and rectify one's sinful past is so outer worldly that its creation preceded the natural order of the universe's design.

The ARI z"l gives us a Kabbalistic understanding of this unusual Talmudic statement. He states the reason the Torah begins with the word B'REISHIT (in the beginning) is because G-d's first creation was a beginning, the onset of time.

Once G-d created time, there was no way to rewind the clock. This would remove the ability to do T'shuva, by going back to the past to reverse past events.

Thus, Kabbala teaches that G-d had to create T'shuva BEFORE creating time, in order to enable us to go above and beyond the laws of nature

and turn back the clock to rectify our past sins.

This is the wonderful gift of T'shuva that G-d gives us during these days of Elul. Let us appreciate this wondrous gift to go back in time and to start all over again with a clean slate! -ESP

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH



by Rabbi Dr Raymond Apple z"l

HARD TO BE A JEW

"This commandment which I command you this day," says the Almighty, "is not too hard for you, neither is it far off" (D'varim 30:11).

Not too hard? It feels that way.

The Rambam's calculation is that there are less than a hundred commandments which apply to the ordinary person living an ordinary life.

Put to one side those commands that apply only to rare categories of people or in rare situations or at rare times, and we are actually left with far less than the famous figure of 613.

Then analyse the commandments that do apply to us, and most of them are not so-called "rituals" but ethical

commands - loving one's neighbour, honest weights and measures, keeping far from a falsehood.

Yet, whether it is ritual or ethical duties that devolve upon us, it is often a difficult task. To keep kashrut or Shabbat correctly is not easy, nor is living a decent, moral, modest, truthful life.

The important thing is to remember that it can be done, not by constantly obsessing about our duty but by developing a mind set which says, "I am training myself to act instinctively in the way I am commanded to"... and to use this method in matters of ethics and not just ritual.

The Jew who has a well-honed ethical instinct will automatically avoid shameful or questionable modes of conduct.

Their instinct will also tell them what to say and what to do when it comes to making decisions, whether they appear great and world-shattering or small and almost insignificant.

THE HAKHEL ASSEMBLY

Every seven years the whole populace gathered for the HAKHEL ("Assemble!") convocation, in order to hear the king read the Torah (31:12).

Everyone had to attend: "men, women, children, and the strangers in your communities". Rabbi Elazar ben

Sedra Highlight

- Dr Jacob Solomon

Nitzavim-Vayeilech

You shall return to the HaShem, your G-d... (30:2).

One of the beauties of our yearly calendar cycle is that we always usher in Rosh HaShana with Parashat Nitzavim (either alone or with Vayeilech), a parasha that encapsulates T'shuva, the importance of repentance, the core value of these serious days. The Rambam explains at length that T'shuva requires us to consider our past behavior patterns, identify the areas where we are falling short, seek to immediately put them right, and flowing from that experience thereafter live on a higher plane. And by so doing, we return to G-d by living closer to His ideals.

The Ramban brings another dimension of T'shuva. When you read a book of any description, you are intimately coming in contact with the writer. The author has no doubt invested heart and soul into that work, and as you study it, you are sharing with the writer what he or she values most. So if you want to have dinner with Shakespeare, read Hamlet. If you'd like George Orwell as your guest, try Animal Farm. If you want to enter the universe that Tolkien created, the Lord of the Rings trilogy is a good start. In a similar vein

Azariya says that the men came to learn, the women to listen and the children to secure a reward for those who brought them (Chagiga 3a).

According to Rambam (Hilchot Chagiga 3:4), the assembly was in the EZRAT NASHIM, the women's court of the Temple, which was apparently used for general meetings.

It is not clear whether the text means that the men and women stood together or were separated on gender lines. The latter seems more likely because social mores kept the sexes apart on public occasions in order to prevent inappropriate behavior.

We are not certain what the situation was with the children - did the boys stay with their father and the girls with their mothers?

There was probably a regulation that said that up to a certain age the mother had the children with her, boys as well as girl, but thereafter the boys stood with the men.

We are not told how family members found each other again afterwards in view of the massive numbers of the Children of Israel. -OZ

Y'HI ZICHRO BARUCH

- L'HAVDIL - as you study the Torah at whatever level you're on, you're engaging with the Author of the Torah, the Almighty Himself. In the introduction to his commentary on the Torah, the Ramban emphasizes that the Torah is G-d's literary output. Every time you involve yourself with Torah study, you are in contact with Him, meaning that you are returning to Him.

Having dinner with G-d as it were, is what learning Torah is about, what G-d's values are, straight from the pen of the Author. Returning to G-d means being more involved with Him through higher quality Torah study.

On Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, the Ashkenazim include the flagship and definitive UNTANEH TOKEF prayer. Its key sentence is UTSHUVA, UTFILLA, UTZDAKA - repentance, prayer, and charity - cancel the evil decree. Using the Ramban's explanation, it is possible to relate this ancient prayer to a much earlier-stated and deeply fundamental concept expressed by Shimon HaTzadik: "The world stands on three things: Torah, Avoda, and Kindness towards others" (Avot 1:2); when humanity achieves those things it is fulfilling the ultimate pinnacle role in the Creation (c.f. Avot 6:1). For these three things, declares Shimon HaTzadik, represent the ultimate purpose of the Creation. And with this explanation, it is the Torah

engagement that powers T'shuva. The Torah engagement also powers Avoda, as it currently does not refer to Temple service as in Shimon HaTzadik's days, but in our times means AVODA SHE-BALEV, the service of the heart; genuine prayer. And finally it powers G'MILUT CHASADIM, in reality tz'daka, acting kindly generously towards other people.

Perhaps this emphasizes the importance of prioritizing regular Torah learning as part of one's T'shuva package. As Rabbi Meir would regularly emphasize: "Whoever studies Torah without any ulterior motive, but sincerely, for its own sake, merits many things... including personal growth and the raising of that individual above all other things in the Creation" (Avot 6:1). 🌿📖



As we approach the Yamim Nora'im, surely the following adjuration in our Parsha stirs us to ask ourselves, so what about us? For it is written:

"Lest there be among you a man or woman... that blesses himself... saying - 'I shall have peace although I walk in

the stubbornness of my heart... as the watered [land] is swept away with the dry" (D'varim 29:17-18).

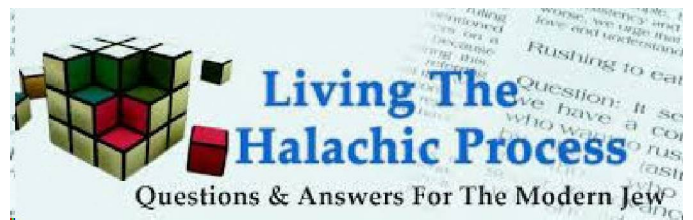
Let us hope that any stubbornness we might exert is not based on one corollary deduced from the above sentence, namely, that a dry field attached to a wet field will willy-nilly benefit from the watered terrain (after the Akedat Yitzchak).

For instance, when we pray with a Minyan, do we not (sometimes) entertain the notion that since our personal petitions are so unworthy, we will nevertheless benefit from the supplications of the tzadikim in our midst?

Yes - Let us hope that we do not count ourselves among those who take themselves out, desiring the privileges of the community without accepting the responsibilities and duties that go with it.

For Hashem warns us that that is not the way because an entire people accepted His covenant.

Moreover, Nechamah Leibowitz, wisely following the Rambam's cautionary note, reminds us that if people perform but one sin or good deed they might tip the scales, not only for themselves but also for the entire world. What a sobering, if not overwhelming, thought to take us into Rosh HaShana. **MP**



Reprinted from Living the Halachic Process by Rabbi Daniel Mann - Eretz Hemdah, with their permission [www.erezhemdah.org]

Blowing shofar on behalf of women

Question: After davening on Rosh Hashana, I often blow the shofar for women who couldn't make it to shul for health or family reasons. Are there any special guidelines for such a situation or issues of which I should be aware?

Answer: Women are exempt from hearing shofar blowing.¹ Although it is forbidden to blow a shofar on Yom Tov not in the context of the mitzva, the optional mitzva for women provides sufficient justification to blow.² In fact, the Maharil points out that for centuries, women have treated the mitzva as if it were obligatory. Although women may blow for themselves or for each other, a man also may blow for them, as is customary.³ Therefore, your practice is very praiseworthy.

The minhag is to blow thirty KOLOT (sounds), three of each set (TASHRAT, TASHAT, TARAT). In

¹ Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 589:3.

² Tur, Orach Chayim 589 in the name of the Ra'avya and Rosh.

³ Shulchan Aruch ibid.:6.

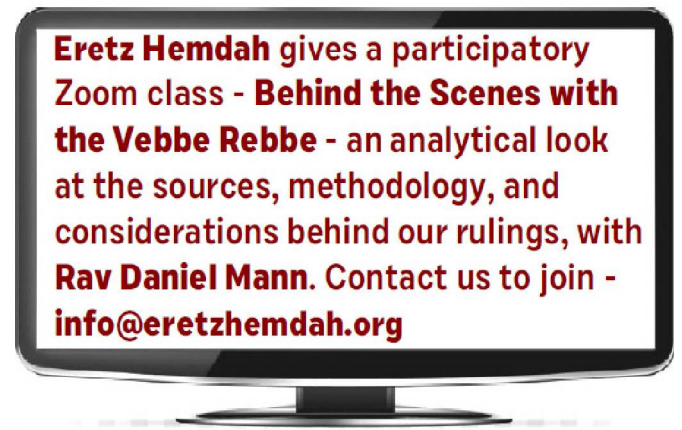
general, there is much debate whether SH'VARIM-T'RU'AH should be done in one breath or two. Therefore, in order to fulfill both opinions, one alternates between the two methods when blowing 100 kolot. Here, when blowing thirty kolot, one should do them in one breath.

There is a specific problem regarding the b'rachot. As you know, one of the b'rachot includes the phrase “and commanded us to hear the sound of the shofar.” The Rishonim disagree whether women may recite such b'rachot on mitzvot about which they, personally, are not commanded (Rabbeinu Tam) or not (Rambam). While S'fardic women do not make the b'rachot, the Rama reluctantly confirms the minhag of Ashkenazic women to make the b'rachot.⁴ Thus, an Ashkenazic woman may herself make the b'rachot. However, a man who already fulfilled his mitzva should not say the b'rachot for them.⁵ The reason for this is that one can make a b'racha for someone else only when one of them is obligated.⁶ Since the man fulfilled his mitzva and the women are exempt, he may not say the b'rachot. Rather, one of the women should make the b'rachot for herself and have in mind to include the others.

⁴ See *Beit Yosef* and *Darchei Moshe*, *Orach Chayim* 17 and 589.

⁵ *Rama*, *Orach Chayim* 589:6.

⁶ *Rashi*, *Rosh Hashana* 29.



CHIZUK & IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

by **Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness**

Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh

Vayeilech - Yamim Nora'im 2019

Life is full of transitions; the world is in constant flux. As we are about to begin the Yamim Norai'im, with ROSH HASHANA almost upon us, it is natural to think of our own personal destiny, as well as to wonder what the future of our People, and the Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael holds in store: Who will lead us? Will the leaders of yesteryear move on, and new ones arrive on the scene? In which direction will they take us?

This week's parsha CONTINUES with the words VAYEILECH MOSHE! - "And Moshe went and spoke these words unto all Israel, and he said unto

them: 'I am 120 years this day and can no longer go out and come in'...' (D'varim 31:1-2).

With these words the Torah describes how the Jewish People's leader par excellence, Moshe Rabbeinu, relates to the realization that it is time for him to go, and for another leader (-Yehoshua) to take the lead. In response to the unspoken question as to where did Moshe 'go', the Ibn Ezra explains that as could be expected from a true leader, Moshe was primarily concerned with the wellbeing of his flock. As a result, Ibn Ezra writes, Moshe went to tell the People that he was about to die, in order to prepare them in advance, so that they should not be afraid of the necessary changes to come. Moshe 'went' to encourage the people to be accepting of Yehoshua's leadership, and to loyally follow his directives "for he shall cause them to inherit the Land". The Alsheich adds that Moshe wished to convey the message that in his passing the People should not feel as if they are losing an irreplaceable leader, since Hashem - the true ultimate leader - will always be with them.

The Kli Yakar explains that Vayeilech refers to actual walking. He writes that Moshe was aware that the words "I can no longer go out and come in" could erroneously be understood by the people as a statement pertaining

to his own physical health and stamina. Therefore, Moshe demonstrates his vigour: VAYEILECH MOSHE - Moshe 'went' - i.e. he walked briskly through the entire length and breath of the camp to demonstrate that he still had the physical ability to lead, however his time had come and he now lacked the Almighty's permission to continue on in his role. The baton had to be passed on to the next in line. When a leader moves on - and others rise to take their place - their legacy may be forgotten with time. A historical footnote that I recently came across, brings us back to the first Rosh HaShana celebrated shortly after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. The scene is the city of Rechovot. The shul is the city's Central Synagogue and the Rabbi was Zvi Yehuda Meltzer zt"l, the city's Chief Rabbi.

Rabbi Meltzer, the son of the world renowned Rav Isser Zalman Melzer zt"l (and brother in-law of R. Aharon Kotler), had been inducted to the position of chief rabbi one year earlier. He had come to Rechovot after having served as Rabbi of Pardes Chana where he had founded Midrashiyat Noam and the Kletzk Yeshiva. Coming to Rechovot he founded Yeshivat HaDarom - (both Yeshivot Noam and HaDarom combined secular studies with Limudei Kodesh, religious studies).

Rabbi Meltzer's independent and out-of-the-box approach, may have influenced his son-in-law, Rav Yehuda Amital zt"l (-of Yeshivat Har Etzion), who - amongst other things - breathed life into Rav Zvi Yehuda Meltzer's belief that army service should be combined with Yeshiva learning, perfecting the model of the Hesder Yeshiva.

Three months after the founding of the State of Israel, as Rav Zvi Yehuda Meltzer zt"l rose to deliver his Rosh HaShana Drasha he was faced with a predicament: Should he deliver his prepared words emphasizing T'shuva and related topics, or should he first acknowledge the illustrious guest who had walked into the shul - Rechovot resident, and president of the nascent State of Israel - Prof. Chaim Weizmann z"l. Although Weizmann had been appointed to the position two days after the founding of the State, he had been delayed abroad and only stepped foot in the independent state, and arrived in his home in Rechovot, a few short days earlier. As Rabbi Meltzer stood up and headed towards the podium, a thought flashed through his mind, and thus he began: "During all the years in Galut, as Jews turned to Hashem, their thoughts and prayers were always clouded by the primal and urgent fear of what the non-Jewish host nation may be plotting against them. Thus their

prayers were focused - first and foremost - on a plea for compassion from the nations". Rav Meltzer zt"l continued by saying that we no longer live in Galut, and here in Eretz Yisrael we are no longer ruled over by others. "Today", he continued, "we are blessed to be in the presence of our own President, whose very existence symbolizes our ability to serve Hashem with a LEV SHALEM, with a complete and pure heart; a heart unclouded with fear." When asked how Prof. Weizmann had responded to these words, R. Meltzer answered that the president's eyes "welled up with tears". The central figures in this historical vignette, have long gone from this world. - Worthy others have taken over their roles. As we pray to Hashem on this year's Yamim Nora'im, we pray that today too we be granted true leaders; leaders whose primary concern is the welfare and best interest of their people. We pray that we be granted an additional year of good health, and be allowed LATZEIT V'LAVO - to come and go in the Holy Land, completing G-d's will and finding favor in his eyes. 🏠👉

These weekly words of Torah wisdom can be found in my recently published book "Eretz Yisrael and Aliyah in the weekly Parsha". It can be ordered by calling 052-336-0553 or by ordering it on Amazon

Dvar Torah by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

Graciously shared with PhiloTorah

Nitzavim Vayeilech

I saw a fascinating idea in the week's Torah reading that can have such a tremendous impact on our daily lives. In Parshat Nitzavim there is an important discussion of the significance of Repentance and the study of Torah.

D'varim 30:11-13 - "For this Mitzva that I command you today is not removed from you, nor is it far. It is not in the heavens that you may say who will go up to the heavens, take it for us, and teach it to us and we shall do it. Nor is it across the sea that you may say who will cross the sea ..."

The simple way of reading the pasuk is that whether you hold like the opinion of Rashi that it is referring to the whole Torah or, as others hold, to the mitzva of T'shuva, they are not out of our grasp. These are not difficult things for us to achieve. However, Rav Kulefsky zt"l pointed out that Rashi reveals that, in fact, the pasuk may be indicating the exact opposite.

Rashi, quoting the Gemara in Eruvin 55a, says that while the Torah is reassuring us that it is not across the sea or in the heavens and therefore, one need not journey there to attain

it, it is implying that if it were, we are expected to go such lengths. The Torah really is relating a stringency in G-d's expectation from us. No matter how far from our reach the Torah is, no matter what extreme changes are necessary to do T'shuva, those extreme paths of action are expected from us.

He illustrated this idea with a story of Rav Zalman of Volozhin, the brother of Rav Chaim. When learning Torah late at night and he needed a sefer that was not readily available, he would not simply move on. He would travel even if it meant going to another city to obtain that sefer.

One's actions should be based upon the above verse. If the Torah or T'shuva were across the sea or in the heavens, one is expected to go there. Any change and effort are never easy but being in the days prior to Rosh HaShana, we can appreciate the need for inner reflection how to make the extra effort in improving ourselves in all our facets of our life. 🏹

The Weekly 'Hi All' by Rabbi Jeff Bienenfeld

Nitzavim-Vayeilech 5780

There is a difficult Midrash (D'varim Rabba 9:6) which depicts Moshe as being despondent and even upset when HaShem tells him, "Behold

(HEIN), your days are drawing near to die." (31:14) "With the word HEIN, Behold, I praised you (see D'varim 10:14), and now, you use that word to decree my death?" HaShem responds: "Moshe, do you not remember when I sent you to redeem the Jews from Egypt, you refused, saying (Sh'mot 4:1), V'HEIN, Behold, they will not believe me and they will not heed my voice.' Therefore, I now decree death upon you with the word HEIN, Behold."

The question is plain. Here's how Rav Pam put it: What indeed was Moshe's mistake. Why would he believe that a people who - for 210 years - had discarded the mitzva of brit mila, who were steeped in idolatry and the depravities of Egypt, and had descended to the 49th level of spiritual impurity - why would such a people respond positively to the word of HaShem? Moshe was convinced his mission would end in abject failure. And ..., that was his mistake.

The Chofetz Chayim (Al HaTorah, p.95) explains that Moshe was guilty of CHOSHEID BICH-SHEIRIM, of suspecting innocent people, of not believing that, notwithstanding their delinquent behavior, the people had within them the purity of soul to hear the voice of Gd and believe that they could be redeemed and elevated. And, in fact, that is exactly what happened. When Moshe finally did

proclaim to them HaShem's desire to liberate them and take them unto Himself as His Chosen Nation, the people did believe (Sh'mot 4:31).

The word, HEIN, explains the Chofetz Chayim, is an expression of unequivocal certainty. Employed by Moshe, it signified that Moshe firmly believed that the people would ignore the miracles he performed and turn their backs on HaShem. And so, measure for measure, after Moshe's repeated pleadings to rescind the decree forbidding him to enter Israel, HaShem responds with a final, definitive "no", and does so with the word, HEIN. Clearly, Moshe's misreading of Israel's true religious potential should not be lost upon us, especially as we approach the coming Yamim Nora'im.

This lesson is twofold: First, one must never give up on any Jew no matter how far that person has strayed. The stain of sin can always be cleansed. Rav Soloveitchik has often referenced the Ba'al HaTanya to the effect that sin is only incidental to the neshama of the Jew; it cannot be blemished. Rather, sin encrusts the soul in layers of impurity making it difficult for it to sense its spiritual Father. However, as Chazal comment on the verse, "I am asleep, but my heart is awake" (Shir HaShirim 5:2), "my heart" refers to HaShem. The Jew may slumber, caught in the thicket of sin, and lose consciousness

of Gd, but HaShem still occupies his soul. There is an indestructible spark of holiness deeply embedded in every Jew's neshama, and that spark can be ignited into a blazing fire of renewed commitment to all that is sacred and precious in our great Mesorah.

The second message is no less critical. A person should never give up on him/herself! As the New Year draws near and we reflect back upon the past year, we may despair of initiating any real changes in our unhealthy behaviors and deeds. How many times did we try to be more patient and control our anger; how many times did we resolve to be more considerate and caring to those of our family and friends; how many times did we commit to improve our religious service to HaShem through Torah study and slower prayer; how many times, how many times...? And we so often fell short.

There is a story of a young Torah scholar who happened upon the Gerer Rebbe at the Kotel. He hesitatingly approached the great Chassidic leader and asked, "What is it about HaShem that I should know before Rosh HaShana? The Rebbe responded cryptically, "Know that HaShem never laughs!" The student didn't quite know what to make of the answer. He was afraid to ask, and so returned to the Gerer Beis Midrash

and asked the Rebbe's relative. This is what he was told: Say, a student comes late to class one day with an excuse. The teacher listens and accepts his explanation. The next day, the student is late again with another extenuation. Again, the teacher pardons the boy, but admonishes him not to be late again. Well, on day three, the boy comes in with yet another excuse. At this point, the teacher begins to laugh. "Do you really expect me to forgive you again?!" HaShem never laughs!

The lesson here could not be more straightforward. From HaShem's perspective, it matters not one iota whether we've failed countless times in our resolve to be better. We may erroneously believe that because of our errant behavior, HaShem has abandoned us. But, as S'forno comments, Gd has not moved at all. He is simply waiting for us to return to Him. And when we do, He never laughs!

Ramban, in his interpretation of the verse, "For this mitzva that I command you this day ... is not hidden or distant from you; it is not in the heavens ... nor beyond the sea. Rather the matter is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart to perform it" (30:11-14), maintains that the mitzva of which the verse speaks is the mitzva of t'shuva, repentance. Indeed, we must believe it is always

possible to return to our Maker, and that no transgression, no matter its frequency or severity, can prevent that wondrous and emotional reconciliation from taking place.

As we approach the Yamim Nora'im, we must never forget that HaShem never laughs! 🙌

Afterthoughts

- Yocheved Bienenfeld

ATEM NITZAVIM HAYOM KUL'CHEM

You are standing today, all of you.

This Parsha introduces yet another b'rit: For you to pass into a covenant of HaShem... and into His oath that HaShem... forges with you today. Whereas the covenant detailed in B'chukotai is one that connects each person with HaShem and the one in Ki Tavo addresses us as a nation with responsibilities toward HaShem, this covenant is different. As the Ohr HaChayim HaKadosh explains: 'Moshe's intention in this covenant is to have them become mutually responsible for one another so that each one would try to help his peer avoid disobeying Hashem' (26:11). This covenant emphasizes our being a nation: LMA'AN HAKIM OT'CHA HAYOM LO L'AM... (26:12) - one whole unit. As R. Moshe Shapira points out, the word AM is from the word IM -

with - meaning the connecting of one to another. And so we are introduced to the concept of AREIVUT. We are all responsible for one another. All of us, ...from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water (26:10).

It is unusual for the Torah to enumerate our people in such detail; it involves all of us. R Yaakov Ariel (Mei'ohalei Torah; Bamidbar, D'varim, Mo'adim; p. 194) draws our attention to something about this that I certainly never noticed before. In enumerating the people here, it doesn't only mention the people and the GEIRIM (which is usual), it specifies as well, 'from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water' - as if these are two ends of a spectrum or opposite extremes. On the surface, this doesn't seem to be so. After all, they are both laborers, doing different kinds of jobs. Why would the Torah list them as extremes? But R. Ariel points out differences that we wouldn't notice. The jobs they have represent significantly different messages. A CHOTEIV EITZIM cuts the branch from the tree, removing it from the source of life. The SHO'EIV MAYIM, on the other hand, takes water from a living source, leaves the source as is, and proceeds to use the water to plant, grow, to enhance life. The demolisher and the builder; the uprooter and the planter; the yetzer hara and the yetzer hatov, perhaps.

The verse, however, includes them as united - in describing their positions, they are connected to each other: AD SHO'EIV MEIMECHA; AD is the connecting word. There is no separation between good and bad; they are not really separate entities.

We can see this as well with the description of the ritual on HAR EIVAL and HAR GRIZIM. The curses were said facing HAR EIVAL, and the blessings, facing HAR GRIZIM. At first glance, it would seem that they are separate - but not really. For both sides answered AMEIN to both the "good" and the "bad" while all facing one direction: the Leviyim, teachers of Torah, who stood between them. Indeed, they were connected.

Are we getting a similar message from the very blowing of the Shofar on Rosh HaShana? Every unit of T'KI'OT consists of three sections:

T'KI'A, SH'VARIM-T'RU'AH, T'KI'A;

T'KI'A, SH'VARIM, T'KIA;

T'KI'A, T'RUAH, T'KI'A.

Notice how the middle of each set is always a "broken" sounds: the T'RU'AH and the SH'VARIM. But each set is surrounded on both sides by a complete, uniform sound, the T'KI'A. The broken sounds must be placed between the two complete ones. The CHOTEV EITZIM, the one who "breaks" things, is to be placed

between SHO'AVEI MAYIM, creators, for there to be the hope that the "broken" ones will become whole. The responsibility for this rests upon those who surround them. AREIVUT - the placing of those who are incomplete among those who are complete; and theirs is the responsibility to unite with them.

I find it interesting that this all takes place outside of Moav, specifically, in Arvot Moav. Could the words be hinting something to us? 'Arvot Moav' - there is an obligation of areivut on those who come mo-av - from the same father? Could be.

It's easy to see that, as is always a possibility, this Parsha contains "hidden" and not-so "hidden" messages, for this time of year especially. ATEM NITZAVIM HAYOM, we stand HAYOM - on the day that Chazal say hints to Yom HaDin, to Rosh HaShana. And exactly how can we come to stand before HaShem and hope for a year of blessing and peace? Only if we come KUL'CHEM - all of us together. ✨

NITZAVIM

[Search the whole file for other GMs](#)

GM The source (alright, one of the sources) for T'SHUVA in the Torah is in Parshat Nitzavim - specifically, D'varim 30:2 -

וְשִׁבַתְּ עִרְיָהּ אֶלֹהֶיךָ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלִי
כָּכֹל אֲשֶׁר-אֶנְכִי מִצְוֶה הַיּוֹם
אֹתָהּ וּבְנֵיהָ בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשֶׁךָ:

And you shall return to HaShem, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and you will listen to His voice according to all that I am commanding you this day you and your children.

The gimatriya of this pasuk is 3805. Five other p'sukim in Tanach share this gimatriya with our pasuk. But, alas, nothing jumps out to make a significant comment about.

However, the AT-BASH gimatriya of this pasuk is 5610. Checking for p'sukim whose regular gimatriyas are 5610, resulted in four p'sukim, and this time, one of them is a significant match for our pasuk. In fact, the match is also in Nitzavim, just eight p'sukim after V'SHAVTA - D'varim 30:10 -

כִּי תִשְׁמָע בְּקוֹלִי ה' אֶלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹמֵר
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וּבְדִבְרֵי הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת
הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת כִּי תָשׁוּב אֵלַי
בְּכָל-לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשֶׁךָ:

When you obey HaShem, your God, to observe His commandments and His statutes written in this Torah scroll, [and] when you return to HaShem, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul.

These two p'sukim are obviously matched in more than regular & AT-BASH gimatriya; they both speak to the same idea of Listening to G-d's

voice, following His commandments, and doing T'shuva for having veered from Him.

VAYEILECH

Search the whole file for other GMs

GM The penultimate mitzva in the Torah (next to the last, mitzva number 62) is HAK-HEL, the mitzva for all Jews to gather in Yerushalayim and here the king read parts of the Torah. D'varim 31:12 -

הִקְהַל אֶת-הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׁים
וְהַיָּתוּם וְהַיְגָר אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ
לְבָמַעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ וּלְבָמַעַן יִלְמְדוּ וְיִירָאוּ
אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְשָׁמְרוּ לְעֲשׂוֹת
אֶת-כָּל-דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת:

Assemble the people: the men, the women, and the children, and your stranger in your cities, in order that they hear, and in order that they learn and fear HaShem, your God, and they will observe to do all the words of this Torah.

The gimatriya of this pasuk is 7617. It is a long pasuk (Vayeilech's p'sukim are the longest of any sedra) with a relatively high gimatriya. Only one other pasuk in Tanach has that gimatriya; and there is no significant comment to be made for the GM.

However, the NISTAR gimatriya of this pasuk is 7575. Checking for p'sukim whose regular gimatriyas are 7575, resulted in only one pasuk in Tanach -

D'varim 12:2, in Parshat R'ei -

אֲבִד תִּאבְדֹּן אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּקְבְּלוֹת
אֲשֶׁר עִבְדוּ־שָׁם הָאֱלֹהִים
אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יֹרְשִׁים אַתֶּם אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיהֶם
עַל־הָהָרִים הַגְּבוּרִים וְעַל־הַגְּבוּעוֹת
וְתִזֹּת כָּל־עֵץ רֵעֵן:

You shall utterly destroy from all the places where the nations, that you shall possess, worshiped their gods, upon the lofty mountains and upon the hills, and under every lush tree.

As the NISTAR gimatriya of a letter, word, phrase, or pasuk, completes the regular gimatriya, we can suggest that the pasuk from R'ei completes the mitzva of HAK-HEL. That once in seven years mitzva, highlights Jewish Unity - specifically, in Eretz Yisrael. Obviously, unity of the People is an essential, vital feature of Jewish Life. But the mitzva to destroy avoda zara in the Land is an important component of full Torah Life in Eretz Yisrael. This mitzva is the first of 176 mitzvot in the middle part of the Book of D'varim (R'ei, Sho-f'tim, Ki Teitzei, and the first part of Ki Tavo). As such, we can see it as leading the way to the Torah Life in Israel that HKBH wants us to live. And the mitzva right after the 176 just mentioned, is HAK-HEL.

RED ALERT!

Nitzavim-Vayeilech

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DIVREI TORAH

- Our Parsha includes a second covenant between God and the Jewish people. What was to be the difference between the covenant on Gerizim and Eival and the covenant made at Sinai?

Kli Yakar (on verse 9) explains that during the ceremony on Mount Gerizim and Mount Eival, the nation established a covenant of areivut - mutual obligations - which was different than the covenant at Sinai which represented personal obligations. Kli Yakar further opines that areivut means shared consequences, and explains that in rabbinic literature the word AREIV connotes a co-signer on a loan.

“Any co-signer who sees the borrower wasting his money - he will rebuke him for fear lest he be forced to pay in his place.”

Therefore, this new covenant utilized the idea of shared consequences to reinforce the covenant of Sinai, ensuring that the ancient Israelites understood the shared consequences of ignoring the rules of their society.

[Note: Areivut also applies to modern scenarios. If my Jewish non-observant neighbor drives his car on Shabbat, it will affect God's judgment of us collectively. Hence I should attempt to influence him positively in his involvement in the Mitzva world. Furthermore, as AIPAC reminds us, allowing Iran to develop nuclear capability will have dire consequences on all the nations, especially those in that region. The inference to be made is not the literal sense of our Parsha, but a valuable message: Global Areivut.]

- (29:14) “And also with them who are not here with us this day.” They refers to future generations. Therefore, you must inform them that the gift of the Land and other (possessions) is given to you on the condition that you keep the covenant, and contingent upon that condition (is the fact that) they will inherit the Land from you. How can those “who are not here this day” be parties to this covenant? The S'forno explains that those who were present were obligated to instruct future generations that the possession of the Land of Israel was contingent upon their continued obedience to the covenant. [Note: When we read in the Sh'ma that we should teach Torah to our children, it is not just the requirement of Torah education that is upon parents. It is a covenantal obligation

to include the next generation in the bonds of Judaism.]

- “The revealed things belong to us and to our children” (29:28). According to the Torah, Moshe stated that there are “revealed things” which are our responsibilities and “hidden things” which remain in the domain of God. The Talmud (Sanhedrin 43b) explains that Moshe used this strange terminology to instill the Israelites with a sense of mutual obligation and responsibility to enforce the strictures of the Torah. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (commentary on 29:28) said that, “this duty of solidarity... is limited to... what is openly or omitted to be done in public, the responsibility for which is shared by everyone whose influence might have presented the sin of commission or omission being done.” Thus, according to the Torah, the entire community had a responsibility not just to follow the directive, but also to ensure that the community did not commit “sins of omission” by ignoring or forgetting the rules dictated in Bible. I view this concept as linked to the Rabbinic requirement to publicize certain miracles. We should also publicly display the performance of Mitzvot in an open society as we have in our community. Many of our non-observant neighbors recognize Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, but are ignorant of Sukkot. Sharing that

Mitzva with neighbors brings them to an awareness of a Mitzva that would otherwise be a “sin of omission.”

- “Life and death I have placed before you, blessing and curse, and you shall choose life so that you and your offspring will live” (30:19). This verse is somewhat puzzling. When Hashem offers you to choose life and you choose it, then isn’t it obvious that you will live?

One straightforward answer that fits in well with the context of the text depends on our noticing that the verses directly before and after this one refer to life specifically in Eretz Yisrael. There were times that a generation sinned so terribly that they brought on exile, but the exile actually took place only a few generations later. The prophet, for example, blames Menashe for the destruction of Yerushalayim (Melachim Bet 23:26), although it took place decades later. Thus, the test of one’s choosing of life in the Land may be only in the lives of the offspring, as the verse infers. (Rav Carmel of Eretz Hemdah)

- The Netziv, understanding the life in question as referring to one’s after-life, points out that there are different relative levels of life and lack thereof. One who sins still has some level of life in the afterlife, which is further reduced the more one sins. To encourage one to see the

value of making proper choices, the Torah points out that the impact will extend to the prospects of future generations as well. We know that people sometimes tire of efforts to save themselves, whether physically or spiritually. Many good people who would find it difficult to succeed are aided by the knowledge that their efforts will help others, certainly when the others are their progeny.

- “And Moshe went.” (31:1) After delivering his speech to the children of Israel, why did Moshe feel the need to go anywhere? If he had more to say he could have easily called the nation back to him. Why did he physically bring his words to the Children of Israel? Chizkuni (on 31:1) explains that Moshe made the extra effort, on the very day of his death, to bring a message of reassurance to the nation and instill in them a sense of confidence in Yehoshua’s leadership. Through his actions, Moshe demonstrated a critical quality in leadership. When the future of a nation is at stake, a leader must be willing to physically take the necessary steps to ensure stability, growth and prosperity.

It is interesting that in modern politics, national leaders are finding value in the “town hall meeting” type of communication with the people. The larger media usage of television and radio is still the preferred method

to mass communication, but the revival of the “town hall meeting” approach is what Moshe understood to develop a closer and more meaningful bond between a leader and his people.

Questions by RED

From the Text

1. Moshe organized a Covenant between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem. It also included those who were not there. Who were not there? (29:14)
2. What would influence a Jewish person to worship idols? (29:16)
3. When the other nations see that Eretz Yisrael will become desolate, and no Jews are there, what will they conclude? (29:24)
4. When Bnei Yisrael will eventually return to obey Hashem, what is the first thing Hashem will do? (30:3)
5. How old was Moshe exactly when he died? (31:1)

From Rashi

6. On what day did Moshe assemble the people for the Covenant? (29:9)
7. Who were the wood choppers and water drawers among Bnei Yisrael? (29:10)
8. When Bnei Yisrael would gather for the Mitzva of Hakhel every seven years, which portion of the Torah will be read? (31:11)

9. Why would Bnei Yisrael bring small children to the Hakhel assembly? (31:12)

10. And teach the song to Bnei Yisrael. What song? (31:19)

From the Rabbis

11. When the Covenant was sealed and the people went home, what did Moshe do? (Ramban)
12. Why was it recommended for non-Jews to attend the Hakhel assembly? (Ibn Ezra)
13. Why is it that writing one letter of a Sefer Torah is sufficient to fulfill the Mitzva of writing a Sefer Torah? (Rambam Hilchot Sefer Torah 7:1)

From the Midrash

14. When a person sins against his friend in public, he should repent and ask forgiveness in public as well. When the sin is against Hashem and is in public, must he repent in public too?

From the Haftara (Yeshayahu)

15. What must happen first in the Final Redemption?

Relationships

- a) Miriam - Korach
- b) Yefuneh - Chur
- c) Aharon - Eliezer
- d) Avraham - Eisav
- e) Chur - Pinchas

ANSWERS

1. Future generations and future converts.
2. Idolatry surrounded Bnei Yisrael on all sides.
3. They will decide that Hashem punished the Jews for deserting Him.
4. He will return the Jewish people to Eretz Yisrael.
5. Exactly 120 years old.
6. On the day of Moshe's death.
7. They were Canaanite people who came to convert to Judaism.
8. From the beginning of D'varim, certain portions.
9. The adults will be rewarded for bringing the children.
10. The song of Ha'azinu.
11. He went from his tent and walked throughout the camp to bid everyone a personal goodbye.
12. Maybe they will be inspired and convert.
13. Because the lack of one letter disqualifies the entire Torah.
14. No, he can do it privately.
15. All the Jews must return to Eretz Yisrael.

Relationships

- a) First cousins
- b) Grandfather & grandson
- c) Uncle & nephew
- d) Grandfather & grandson
- e) First cousins once removed