

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET  
ON PARSHAS NITZAVIM VAYEILECH - 5756

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Ohr Somayach Torah Weekly - Nitzavim - Vayelech

\* TORAH WEEKLY \* Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion with "Sing, My Soul!" thoughts on Shabbos Zemirosh Parshas Nitzavim - Vayelech For the week ending 23 Elul 5756 6 & 7 September 1996

Overview - Nitzavim On the last day of his life, Moshe gathers together all the people, both young and old, lowly and exalted, men and women in a final initiation. The covenant includes not only those who are present, but even those generations yet unborn. Moshe admonishes the people again to be extremely vigilant against idol worship, because in spite of having witnessed the abominations of Egypt, there will always be the temptation to experiment with foreign philosophies as a pretext for immorality. Moshe describes the desolation of the Land of Israel which will be a result of the failure to heed Hashem's mitzvos. Both their descendants and foreigners alike will remark on the singular desolation of the Land and its apparent inability to be sown or to produce crops. The conclusion will be apparent to all -- the Jewish People have forsaken the One who protects them, in favor of idols which can do nothing. Moshe promises, however, that the people will eventually repent after both the blessings and the curses have been fulfilled. However assimilated they will have become among the nations, eventually Hashem will bring them back to Eretz Yisrael. Moshe tells the people to remember that the Torah is not a remote impossibility; rather its fulfillment is within the grasp of every Jew. The Parsha concludes with a dramatic choice between life and death. Moshe exhorts the people to choose life.

Vayelech On this, the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent throughout the camp, bidding farewell to his beloved people, encouraging them to "keep the faith." Moshe tells them that whether he is among them or not, Hashem is with them, and will vanquish their enemies. Then he summons Yehoshua, and in front of all the people, exhorts him to be strong and courageous as the leader of the Jewish People. In this manner, he

B'S'D' strengthens Yehoshua's status as the new leader. Moshe teaches them the mitzvah of Hakhel: That every seven years on the first day of the intermediate days of Succos, the entire nation, including small children, is to gather together at the Temple to hear the King read from the Book of Devarim. The sections that he reads deal with faithfulness to Hashem, the covenant, and reward and punishment. Hashem tells Moshe that his end is near, and he should therefore summon Yehoshua to stand with him in the Mishkan, where Hashem will teach Yehoshua. Hashem then tells Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land, the people will be unfaithful to Him, and begin to worship other gods. Hashem will then completely "hide his face," so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at the mercy of fate, and that they will be hunted by all. Hashem instructs Moshe and Yehoshua to write down a song -- Ha'azinu -- which will serve as a "witness" against the Jewish People when they sin. Moshe records the song in writing and teaches it to Bnei Yisrael. Moshe completes his transcription of the Torah, and instructs the Levi'im to place it to the side of the Aron (Holy Ark), so that no one will ever write a new Torah Scroll that is different from the original -- for there will always be a reference copy.

Insights

Dreaming Of The Light "And you will return to Hashem, your G-d" (30:2) Pitch Black. Total Darkness. Suddenly a ray of light from a candle pierces the gloom, and the darkness dissolves. It's as though the darkness was never there. It's vanished, vanquished. Nothing rules now but light, and darkness recedes into the memory like a dimly remembered bad dream. This is the way of Teshuva. When we come back to Hashem, we become like new creations, and all our past life is no more than a dim memory of a bad dream in the radiance of our return... (Based on the Baal Shem Tov in Degel Machane Ephraim seen in Iturei Torah)

Getting To The Upper Third "Gather together the nation, the men and the women and the children...in order that they will hear and they should learn..." (31:12) Every seven years, the king reads the Torah in the presence of the entire nation. This is the mitzvah of Hakhel. Even though the young children did not understand what was being read to them, their parents received reward for bringing them. This reveals to us a major principle in the education of the young. Even though they may make a noise and be distracting to their elders, the experience for them is irreplaceable; for they feel, through osmosis, the importance to the Torah. Even though they cannot understand a word, they have imbibed a vital lesson: That the Torah is the life blood of the Jewish People. Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky zt"l was once visiting a kindergarten of a Torah school. Noticing that all the mezuzos on the doors were placed in the lower third of the doorposts, he remarked "It's a lovely idea to put the mezuzah in a place where the children can easily reach up and touch them, but please put them where they belong, on the upper third of the doorpost, and let the children use a stool to reach the mezuzah. Otherwise they will grow up thinking that you can put the mezuzah anywhere you wish. One does not raise children with untruths." This story can serve as a parable for our whole relationship to the Torah. We must go up to the Torah, not bring the Torah down to our level. Wherever the attempt has been made to make Judaism 'easier', the outcome is that people have come to despise it and reject it altogether. We may be no more than spiritual children, but we will never grow into adults unless we look up to that mezuzah. And then, maybe, one day, we will be able to reach it by ourselves, unaided by a stool. But if we learn that we have to make no effort to raise ourselves up to the Torah, we will make the mistake of thinking that we are already shoulder-high to the Torah -- that we need to make no efforts to change and improve ourselves. We will thus both debase the Torah and give ourselves no motivation to grow. We will merely sit back like self-congratulatory pygmies, convinced that we are already spiritual giants. (Based on a story reported by Rabbi Nisson Wolpin in the Jewish Observer seen in Growth through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

On His Majesty's Service "For the thing is very close to you; in your mouth and in your heart to do it." (30:15) Feeling. Speech. Action. This is the order of things. First comes feeling -- the heart -- which is then crystallized

into speech -- the mouth. Then speech becomes further concretized, garbing itself in the clothes of physical action -- doing. This is the normal sequence of events. Why does the Torah here alter this natural order? Why does the 'mouth' -- speech -- precede the 'heart' -- feeling, and only then comes 'to do it' -- action? There are times when we cannot rely on our natural feelings to bring us to serve Hashem in the proper way. Times when the heart does not necessarily speak eloquently, when feelings are numbed and we are distant from ourselves and our Creator. Times when we may be confused and we lack the will to transform a fledgling feeling into speech, let alone speech into deed. It is at those times we need to use our mouths to open our hearts. To cry out to He who always listens. To He who opens all hearts. Only then will we be able to transform the meditation of the heart into the active service of The Master of the World. (Based on an idea heard from Rabbi Mordechai Perlman)

Haftorah: Yishaya 61:10-63:9 - Only Happiness Is A Two-Way Street "I will rejoice intensely with Hashem, my soul shall exult with my G-d." (61:10) Our Sages teach that "a person is obligated to make a blessing on adversity just as he makes a blessing on good." (Berachos 54) However, this is only when the misfortune happens to oneself. But if one's neighbor is beset by tragic events, it is forbidden to rejoice. In fact, a person is obligated to empathize with the pain of his neighbor. This is the intention of this verse: "I will rejoice intensely with Hashem..." When I perceive Hashem through the aspect of His Mercy, when He blesses me with an abundance of revealed good, then I can both rejoice and give others cause to rejoice. However, when I perceive G-d through the aspect of His Judgment -- "my soul shall exult with my G-d." -- when affliction befalls me, only I am allowed to exult, for "a person is obligated to make a blessing on adversity just as he makes a blessing on good." But when misfortune befalls others, then not only am I forbidden to exult, I must seek out every way to empathize with them in their loss. (Avodas Yisrael in Mayana shel Torah)

Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations.

Yom Zeh Mechubad - "This Day Is Honored..."

Six days you shall do your work and the seventh is for your G-d shayshes yamim ta'aseh m'lachtecha, v'yom hashvi'i laylokecha

In contrast to the simple interpretation of the Fourth Commandment as permitting creative labor for six days and forbidding it on the seventh, Rabbi Bachya ben Asher (author of Rabbeinu Bachya on the Torah) offers this fascinating insight which he heard in the name of Ramban: During the six days of the week you are able to serve Hashem with your regular labors just as the forefathers who served Him with the tending of their cattle and other physical efforts. But on Shabbos your service is limited to desisting from any labor at all. We echo this thought when we paraphrase the words of this commandment and follow it with the chorus that "this day is honored above all days because on it rested the Creator of the Universe."

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YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH PROJECT  
(VBM)

PARSHAT HASHAVUA  
PARSHAT NITZAVIM  
by Menachem Leibtag

This week's shiur is dedicated in memory of Morris Sohn, father of my close friend Shmuel Sohn ('76-'78), who passed away this morning.

PARSHAT NITZAVIM

Can man return to Gan Eden? Parshat Breishit leaves us with the impression that its gates, guarded by "kruvim" and a fiery sword (Br. 3:24), are closed to

man forever. Parshat Nitzavim, however, alludes to the possibility that man, if worthy, can be rewarded with a Gan Eden type environment, not only in the world to come, but even in this world.

This week's shiur explores an interesting textual and thematic parallel between Gan Eden and Eretz Yisrael.

INTRODUCTION

Our series of shiurim on Sefer Dvarim has focused thus far on the internal structure of Moshe Rabeinu's main speech, chapters 5->26, which details the various mitzvot which Bnei Yisrael must keep upon entering the land. That speech, which concluded in Parshat Ki-tavo, is followed by a special commandment to Bnei Yisrael to gather on Har Eival (on the 'day they cross the Yarden' / see chapters 27->28) in order to:

- write down the mitzvot of Sefer Dvarim, in order to read and teach them to Bnei Yisrael (27:1-4,8);
- erect a "mizbayach" and offer OLOT & SHLAMIM (27:5-7);
- conduct a covenantal ceremony which includes the public reading of the "tochacha" (27:11-28:69).

[It is important to note the fundamental difference between the "tochacha" and the main speech of Sefer Dvarim. The main speech describes the MITZVOT which Bnei Yisrael must keep upon entering the Land, while the "tochacha" describes Bnei Yisrael's REWARD should they OBEY these mitzvot and their PUNISHMENT should they DISOBEY them. This explains why the "tochacha" follows the main speech.]

A PARALLEL TO HAR SINAI

An interesting parallel exists between this commandment and the events which took place at Har Sinai forty years earlier, as described at the end of Parshat Mishpatim (see 24:3-11). There, we find that Moshe:

- writes down the laws and reads them to the nation;
- erects a "mizbayach" and offers OLOT & SHLAMIM;
- conducts a covenantal ceremony.

[Note that there was also a "tochacha" at Har Sinai, as detailed in Parshat Bchukotei - See Vayikra 26:3-46.]

Now, forty years later, this ceremony must be 'repeated', for most of the nation which is now about to enter Eretz Canaan was not present at the original ceremony. Furthermore, it is important for the NEW generation to recognize that it is their duty to fulfill the goals and destiny which was originally planned for the generation of their parents.

[Note: In Sefer Yehoshua we find many other similar parallels between "dor yotzei mitzrayim" and "dor knisa la'aretz", most probably for the very same reason.]

ONE MORE SPEECH - BRIT NITZAVIM

After instructing Bnei Yisrael concerning the commandments which are to be performed on Har Eival, Moshe adds an additional speech, which includes all of Parshat Nitzavim (29:1-30:20 [it actually begins at the very end of Ki-tavo]). In this speech, Moshe explains that:

- this covenant is binding for all generations (29:9-28);
- even should Bnei Yisrael break this covenant, the option of "teshuva" (repentance) always remains (30:1-10);
- keeping these mitzvot is indeed possible! (30:11-14)

The need for these three sections of the final speech may relate to the nature of this covenant. (a) The fact that it is necessary to make a covenant at Har Eival for the new generation which was not present at Har Sinai could lead to the conclusion that Brit Har Sinai was only binding to those who were actually present. Therefore, Moshe must emphasize in his speech that: "Not with you alone do I make this covenant... but both with those who are standing here today... AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT WITH US HERE TODAY." (29:13-14)

This covenant for the new generation is necessary specifically because Bnei Yisrael are about to enter the land, and NOT because the original covenant was not binding!

(b) Likewise, the strict nature of this covenant may lead Bnei Yisrael to conclude that should they actually break their side and thus be sent into exile,

that the covenant would then be nullified for ever. Moshe, the refore, must emphasize that the option of "teshuvah" exists forever. Am Yisrael can always return to God as His covenantal partner, EVEN if they have been sent into exile:

When all these things befall you... and you take them to heart amidst the various nations to which God has EXILED you, then YOU CAN RETURN TO GOD... with all your heart and soul... then God will take you back..." (30:1-5)

(c) Finally, the requirement to keep so many mitzvot, as explained in Sefer Dvarim, may lead one to conclude that keep this covenant is practically impossible. Moshe assures Bnei Yisrael that this is not so.

"Surely, the mitzvot which I teach you today is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond your reach... it is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to observe it." (30:11-14)

#### THE FINALE

Moshe concludes his speech with a important statement which underscores the very purpose of Sefer Dvarim:

See, I set before you today CHAYIM (life) and TOV (prosperity), MAVET (death) and RAH (adversity).

For I command you today to LOVE God and walk in His ways [i.e. the MITZVAH section/ 6->11] and to keep His CHUKIM u'MISHPATIM [the second section of the main speech/ 12->26] that you may thrive and increase and that God will bless you in the Land that you are about to conquer...

Should you turn your heart (not listen)... I declare today that you shall certainly perish and not endure on the Land... that you are to conquer." (30:15-18)

After summarizing the primary purpose of the Sefer, Moshe Rabeinu adds one final sentence in which he repeats again his definition of CHAYIM and MAVET:

"I call "SHA'MAYIM V'ARETZ" to testify, I am presenting you the CHOICE of CHAYIM or MAVET - the "bracha" or "klalla" - and you should choose CHAYIM in order that you live... on this Land which I promised to your ancestors... (30:19-20)

In this finale, we find a textual parallel to Gan Eden. Not only do we find "shamayim va'aretz" as witnesses (see Br. 2:4), but we find the key phrases: CHAYIM & MAVET, TOV & RA'AH, which relate to the Tree of Life (CHAYIM / 2:23) and the Tree of Knowledge (TOV v'RA'AH/2:16).

This textual parallel is supported by a thematic similarity, for in Gan Eden we find an environment very similar to that created in Eretz Yisrael by Sefer Dvarim. There, man was promised a prosperous physical existence should he OBEY God, and was threatened with death should he DISOBEY Him (see Br. 2:15-17). When Adam ha'Rishon actually sinned, this 'death sentence' was translated into his EXILE from the Garden (3:23).

Thus, it appears that the 'end' of Chumash complements the beginning. Although in Sefer Breishit, God's original intention that man enjoy a close relationship with Him in Gan Eden 'failed', Sefer Dvarim concludes with the possibility that the Nation of Israel can return to such an environment in the Land of Israel.

shabbat shalom  
menachem

#### FOR FURTHER IYUN

##### A. PARSHAT VA'YELECH

Since it's a double Parsha, a quick shiur on Va'yelech which relates to the above shiur.

##### HAK'HEL & MA'AMAD HAR SINAI

In Parshat Va'yelech, we find the mitzvah of Hak'hel, in which the entire nation must gather at the Beit Ha'Mikdash once every seven years on Chag ha'Succot. Here again, we find that the Torah (Sefer Dvarim) is read in public, in a fashion very similar to the ceremonies at Har Sinai and Har Eival (see 31:9-13).

Even though we explained above that the covenant of Sinai is binding for all generations, it seems as though it is necessary to periodically 're-create' the Sinai experience. Therefore, once every seven years, we must re-live that

experience.

Even though we do not find OLOT & SHLAMIM mentioned in the parsha of HAKHEL, they are actually there, for it takes place on Succot which includes the mitzvah for each individual to bring OLOT and SHLAMIM as part of their obligation of "aliyah l'regel".

Although the mitzvot of the Torah are to be taught and kept on a daily basis by every individual, a periodic 'national gathering', including all the elements of Har Sinai, contains tremendous significance. It emphasizes, once again, that the purpose of the mitzvot of Sefer Dvarim was not simply to provide each individual with a list of mitzvot which he needs to observe, but also to create an "am kadosh" (a holy nation) in the Land of Israel, which will represent God before other nations.

B. Another interesting textual parallel exists between the mitzvah of Hak'hel and the description of "Ma'amad Har Sinai", as described earlier in Sefer Dvarim (4:5-14). Precisely in the same 'parsha' where Sefer Dvarim explains the ultimate national purpose for keeping these mitzvot, we find a parallel description of "Ma'amad Har Sinai":

"See, I have taught you 'chukim & mishpatim"... for you to keep in the Land which you are about to enter and conquer.

Keep them and do them, for they are the proof of your wisdom and discernment IN THE EYE OF THE NATIONS, who upon hearing these laws they will say...For what a great nation that has God so close to it... and what great nation has laws and rules as perfect as this Torah..." (4:5-8)

That parsha then continues with a commandment not to forget "Ma'amad Har Sinai":

"But take utmost care ... NOT TO FORGET the things you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your memory as long as you live, and MAKE THEM KNOWN TO YOUR CHILDREN AND CHILDREN'S CHILDREN - The DAY YOU STOOD BEFORE

GOD AT HAR CHOREV ("ma'amad har sinai") when Hashem told me GATHER THE PEOPLE TOGETHER that I may let them hear my words... (4:9-11)

Now we will show the parallel (using transliterated hebrew) to the psukim of Hak'hel:

AT HAR SINAI (4:10-12):

yom asher umad'tah lifnei Hashem b'Chorev b'emor Hashem alei HAK'HEL LI ET HA'AM v'ASH'MIYAIM et dvarei asher YIL'M'DUN L'YIRAH oti KOL HA'YAMIM, asher heym CHAYIM AL HA'ADAMA v'et

B'NEIHEM y'LAMEIDUN.

AT HAK'HEL (31:12-13):

"HAK'HEL ET HA'AM, ha'anshim v'ha'nashim v'hataf ... l'maan YISHM'U ul'maan YIL'M'DU v'YARU et Hashem.... u'B'NEIHEM asher lo ya'du, YISHM'U v'LAM'DU l'YIRAH et Hashem KOL HA'YAMIM asher atem CHAYIM AL HA'ADAMA. [It is easier just to compare them by yourself in hebrew.] -----

C.. We mentioned above that the psukim at the end of Parshat Nitzavim (30:15-20) that allude to Gan Eden could be considered the finale of the speeches in Sefer Dvarim. Note the literary style from chapter 31 onward. 1. What person is the narrative in (1st or 3rd)? What person were the previous sections of Dvarim written in? 2. Is the style more similar to Sefer Dvarim or to Sefer Bamidbar. 3. Could this be considered a continuation of Sefer Bamidbar? explain why either yes or no.

D. In 29:12-14, we find once again the concept of a special nation. Relate this to our entire series of shiurim on Sefer Dvarim.

E. Note the Rambam concerning the laws of Hakhel in Hilchot Hagiga perek III. Note also halacha 5 concerning "geyrim". (if you have a chance, read also the seventh perek of mishnayot Sota) 1. How do these halachot relate to the above shiur. 2. Why do you think we skip from shma to v'haya im shmoa? 3. III/5 Why does the Rambam emphasize davka that the "geyr" must feel as though he is standing at Har Sinai?

F. Based on the above shiur, why do think the Ramban records the halachot

of Hakhel in Hilchot Hagiga and not in Hilchot Shmita & Yovel!?

G. Note the machloket among the m'forshim on chumash as to whether Hakhel takes place at the beginning or end of the shmita year, and the various reasons given. 1. How does this relate to the parallel to Har Sinai?

H. It is the mitzvah that the melech read the Torah in public at Hak'hel. 1. Suggest various reasons based on the content of Sefer Dvarim which would explain this halacha.

I. According to 'pshat' it would appear that the Sefer Torah which Hashem commands be put next to the Aron is only Sefer Dvarim. Note the machloket rishonim on this topic (see 31:9 & 31:24-26). 1. Try to explain the reason for this machloket. 2. Why is this Torah placed next to the Aron, (what does the Aron contain. 3. As usual, relate this to the shiurim thus far on Sefer Dvarim. J. Relate the fact that at the focal point of the Beit HaMikdash - "ha'Makom asher yivchar Hashem" - in the kodosh ha'kodashim (the Holy of Hollies), lies the ark containing the "luchot ha'BRIT" - the covenant between God and His people, and the Sefer Torah (see 31:9,24-26!), which are 'protected' by KRUVIM.

Relate this to the "kruvim" - the guardians of Gan Eden (3:24).

Relate this also to the pasuk in Mishlei "eytz cha'yim hee l'mach'zikim bah..." (Mishlei 3:17-18/ Read entire perek!)

Why do you think we say this pasuk each time we return the Torah to the "aron kodosh"?

Does observing the Torah parallel the "derech eytz ha'CHA'YIM"? Is the path to the Tree of Life open once again?

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SICHOT - Parashat Nitzavim STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT  
DELIVERED BY THE ROSHEI YESHIVA  
PARASHAT NITZAVIM  
SICHA OF HARAV LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT" A

The Principle of Choice and the Principle of Teshuva

Summarized by Danny Orenbuch

"In the beit midrash (study-hall) of Rabbeinu Nissim it was once asked, 'Why do we divide the [double] portion of Nitzavim-Vayeilekh into two when there are two Shabbatot between Rosh Ha-shana and Sukkot (not counting Yom Kippur), rather than dividing [the double portion of] Mattot-Mas'ei, which are longer?' And he answered, 'Because in the parasha of Nitzavim there are curses with which he cursed Israel, and we wish to conclude them before Rosh Ha-shana.' But this reply is difficult, for we do not count the curses which Moshe Rabbeinu cursed! And furthermore, according to this explanation why do we not read [parashat] Ha'azinu before Rosh Ha-shana, for here too there are curses?... Therefore it seems to me that the reason we divide them is because we want to finish and to read on the Shabbat before Rosh Ha-shana a parasha which makes no mention of curses, in order not to juxtapose curses with Rosh Ha-shana." (Tosafot Megilla 31a, s.v. Kelalot)

According to the second opinion in Tosafot above, our parasha contains no curses but rather, on the contrary, is to be considered as a break from them. Even Rashi who, contrary to the Ramban (who holds that Sefer Devarim is a book of good tidings about appeasement and mercy), believes that this is a book of rebuke, perceives a change in our parasha: "And a midrash aggada teaches: Why was the parasha of Nitzavim placed next to that of the curses? Because [the nation of] Israel had heard one hundred curses minus two... Their faces fell, and they said: 'Who can stand this?!' Moshe Rabbeinu began to appease them: 'You are standing (nitzavim) here today' - you have angered God greatly, but He has not destroyed you, and here you are, standing before Him today. And just as He exists today and He darkens and makes light, so he made light for you [in the past], and so will He make light for you in the future..." (Rashi, Devarim 29:12)

Indeed, our parasha, although short, may be considered the "minority which determines the majority" from the point of view of the important

principles which it contains. We may perhaps even regard it as the crowning glory of the entire Sefer Devarim.

The first major principle is that of free choice. Even though this has been mentioned previously in the Torah, a concentrated discussion of the topic is presented here. Furthermore, our parasha explicitly presents the choice between the two paths: "See, I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil" (Devarim 30:15). Nevertheless, there is a command that we choose the normative path: "And you shall choose life."

Another important principle mentioned in our parasha is that of teshuva (repentance). This idea, too, has already been mentioned. In parashat Naso we are told, "A man or woman who commits any mortal transgression to sin against God, such that that person will be guilty, then they must confess their sin which they did and make full restitution for their sin" (Bamidbar 5:5-7). Earlier in Sefer Devarim, too, in parashat Va'etchanan, we learn: "And you shall return unto the Lord your God, and you shall listen to His voice." (Devarim 4:30)

Clearly, there is a difference between the two descriptions - the one in Sefer Bamidbar and the other in Sefer Devarim - in terms of both background and scope, and both in the procedure of teshuva and in its results and ramifications.

From the point of view of background, Sefer Devarim is speaking of people who are completely cut off and removed from God. So it is that parashat Va'etchanan describes a scene where, "when you give birth to children and grandchildren and you shall have stayed long in the land and shall become corrupt, and you shall make an idol, the likeness of anything, and you shall perform evil in the eyes of the Lord your God to make Him angry;" this describes a situation of idolatry with the purpose of angering God. This is also the background to our parasha - people who were expelled from the land and exiled as a result of the curses (spelled out in the previous parasha, Ki Tavo) which God visits upon them because of their evil ways and deeds. Sefer Bamidbar, on the other hand, deals with the person who happens to stray from the straight path on a particular occasion: one who commits a single transgression for which he seeks to atone.

As regards scope, too, there is a difference. While Sefer Devarim describes a general, national phenomenon, Sefer Bamidbar deals with the individual who sins.

Since the background to teshuva is different in these cases, the process, too, is different. For the person who sinned in one particular instance, it is sufficient to perform a "technical" teshuva consisting of vidui (confession) and a sin-offering, after which he is considered to have atoned for his sin. In Sefer Devarim, which deals with the person who is - as a general state of affairs - distanced and cut off from God, a complete change of personality is required, penetrating his heart and innermost character: "And you shall take it to heart..." (30:1). Furthermore, because he is removed, he is obligated to return: "And you shall return to the Lord your God" (4:30). The effort required of him is also greater: "You shall find Him, if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (4:29), "and you shall return unto the Lord your God... with all your heart and with all your soul" (30:2).

The ramifications and reaction on God's part are also different. A person who is so far removed from God needs assistance from Above: "From there the Lord your God will gather you up, and from there will He take you" (30:4); "and the Lord your God will circumcize your hearts..." (30:6). And finally, the happy tidings of teshuva and redemption together: "And the Lord your God will return your captivity and will have mercy on you, and He shall gather you up again from all the nations among which the Lord your God scattered you."

(Originally delivered at Leil Shabbat, Shabbat Parashat Nitzavim 5752.

Translated by Kaeren Fish.)

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Weekly Dvar Torah

Rabbi Moshe Shulman

### "THE DIALOGUE OF THE 7 HAFTOROT OF COMFORT"

During these weeks we read 7 Haftorot from the prophet Isaiah, 7 beautiful pictures of comfort and hope, messages of future Redemption, and Messianism. They are meant to carry us out of the gloom and melancholy of Tisha Ba'av, to the beautiful heights of Redemption on Rosh Hashanah, when we declare that G-d is King and Master over the entire world.

But why these particular passages? They don't even appear in the order of the chapters of Isaiah. Why read them out of sequence?

Perhaps hidden in all 7 of these prophecies is the secret. Together they tell a story. They tell the story of how we indeed manage to move from a Tisha Ba'av to a Rosh Hashanah!

Look at the first verse of each of the Haftorot, in sequence:

1.NACHAMU NACHAMU AMI - YOMAR ELOCKEICHEM

"Be comforted, be comforted, will the Lord say."

2.VA'TOMER TZION AZAVANI HASHEM VA'HASHEM SH'CHACHANI

"And Zion said: G-d has forsaken me, G-d Has forgotten me."

3.ANIYA SO'ARA LOH NUCHAMA

"Like a storm-tossed ship, she refuses to be comforted."

4.ANOCHI ANOCHI HU MENACHEMCEM

"It is I, it is I - Who comforts thee."

5.RONI, AKARA LOH YALADA, PITZCHI RINA VE'TZAHALI

"Sing, O barren one, break forth into song, and cry aloud."

6.KUMI ORI KI VA ORECH U'CHVOD HASHEM ALAYICH ZARACH

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

7.SOS ASIS BA'HASHEM, TAGEL NAFSHI BE'ELOKEI...

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my G-d."

These selected chapters form a dialogue between the prophet, or G-d, and Israel. First, the prophet speaks in the name of G-d: "Be comforted will the Lord speak."

And Israel's response:

"G-d has forsaken me, G-d Has forgotten me." and "Like a storm-tossed ship, she refuses to be comforted." No message from the prophet can lift up the broken spirit of the Jew after the Destruction of the Temple, and the devastation of the Jewish Nation. No words of "NACHAMU" seem to speak to that empty soul!

Then G-d Himself responds:

"It is I, it is I - Who comforts Thee." Therefore - "Sing, O barren one, break forth into song, and cry aloud." "Arise, shine, for thy light is come"

G-d Himself, as it were, comforts the people.

And indeed to this message the people respond - "I will, indeed, rejoice in the Lord" - for the Lord Himself comforts.

This is the key to the eternal boundless hope of the Jewish people!

Destruction after destruction, Israel could have said many times: "G-d Has forsaken me. G-d Has forgotten me." And yet we continue to have faith. We continue to yearn for the future. We continue to dedicate our lives, and the lives of our children to a life filled with Torah, with G-d, and with Messianic hope. The secret: "It is I, It is I Who comforts Thee" - That quiet voice telling us - G-d not only has not forsaken us - but G-d is with us, even in Exile!

IMO ANOCHI BE'TZARA - "I am with them in their hardship." GALTA SHECHINA IMAHEM - "The Divine Presence went with them into exile."

Picture the scene: The Temple of Solomon is destroyed, the breastplate of the High Priest silenced forever. No more fire emerging from Heaven to light the Altar. Never again will the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies and emerge, bringing the message of forgiveness. In the eyes of the people, G-d was burnt along with the Temple!!

"And Zion said: G-d has forsaken me."

EICHAH? Not "How did it happen?" They knew only too well how it happened. EICHAH - "How can we go on?" How can the Jewish people continue without G-d? What meaning is there for our lives after the

destruction?!

"And Zion refused to be comforted."

After the expulsion of the Jews from England, and from Spain; after the Chmelnitzki pogroms; after the Cossack massacres; after the Holocaust - How can we go on? Where is G-d?

"And Zion said: G-d has forgotten me."

Yet the Jewish people continued. They ultimately understood that G-d did not forsake His people - He went with them into Exile! The prophet Yechezkel saw a vision - The throne of G-d emerging from the Temple Mount, and travelling - EASTWARD, towards Bavel - G-d accompanying the Jews into exile!

"It is I, it is I who comforts thee."

The Jew did not turn his back on G-d, because He always knew that G-d had not turned His back on the Jew! In every exile, in every Diaspora, the Jews carried G-d, and Torah, with them.

The greatest optimist of all time was Rabbi Akiva, who witnessed the burning of the Temple and who saw the impact of the destruction watching a jackal emerge from the ruins of the Holy and Holies. It was Rabbi Akiva who laughed in joy at that scene, because he knew that if the prophecy of destruction was fulfilled, the prophecy of redemption would be as well. After the destruction is over, the next step would be redemption.

It was Rabbi Akiva who said, about Yom Kippur: "Happy are you O Israel: before whom are you purified? Before your father in Heaven."

It has been suggested that Rabbi Akiva stated these words of comfort the very first Yom Kippur after the Destruction. The Jews, despondent and broken, saw no reason to celebrate Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur had always been a Temple service. Where were the goats? Where were the white garments of the High Priest? Without the Temple, there can be no Yom Kippur. And Rabbi Akiva's response - You stand before G-d, even without the Temple. Rejoice - you will be purified, only now you stand before G-d instead of before the High Priest.

How much hope and optimism was necessary to utter those words?

"Sing, O barren one, break forth into song, and cry aloud."

Parshat Ki Tavo tells of the consequences which would befall the people if they rejected G-d: Sickness, war, devastation, destruction, and exile. But the following portion, Nitzavim, tells of Redemption: "And G-d will return you from the exiles; no matter how spread out the Jews are G-d will bring them back." The Jew always found comfort, because G-d was with him, even in times of sorrow.

"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the Glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

Certainly no generation knows this better than ours. After Auschwitz, Treblinka, the Warsaw Ghetto, how easy it was to look back and say: "G-d has forsaken me. G-d has forgotten me." Yet, somehow we always managed to find trust in G-d. We always knew that despite the hardships - He was with us, helping us, strengthening us. It isn't easy. But it is the secret of our survival.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my G-d."

We always managed to find some glimmer of hope, some reason to live, and build for the future. The Mirrer Yeshiva, which escaped during the war to Shanghai, and later found its way to New York, and to Israel. New Yeshivot, rising up in the new communities in North America, and Israel, to replace the ones that were destroyed. Rebuilding, and restrengthening, always knowing that G-d is with us.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my G-d."

May we continue to grow in strength and hope, and may the Redemption of our people continue to unfold before us.

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DRASHA PARSHAS NITZAVIM-VAYELECH -- SCHOOL OF SOFT KNOCKS 9/3/96 Volume 2 Issue 47

Parshas Vayelech has Moshe handing the reign of power to his beloved disciple Yehoshua, who now will grasp hold of the destiny of the Children of Israel. Moshe does not leave him without first guiding him through the

difficult mission of leadership. At the end of Parshas Vayeilech, (Deuteronomy 31:7), "Moshe summoned Yehoshua and said to him before the eyes of all Israel, 'Be strong and courageous and do not be broken before them, for Hashem your G-d -- it is he who goes before you.'"

The Torah does not specify what "strong and courageous" actually means. I conjured my own visions of how to be strong and courageous when dealing with a "stiff-necked" people. It entailed exacting demands and rigid regulations. The Medrash, however, offers a totally opposite explanation. The Yalkut Shimoni, a compendium of Midrashim compiled in the Middle Ages, discusses a verse in Hoshea. "Israel is but a beloved lad and in Egypt I had called them my child." It quotes the verse in Deuteronomy 31:7, and explains the words "strong and courageous." Moshe explained to Joshua, "this nation that I am giving you is still young kids. They are still young lads. Do not be harsh with them. Even their Creator has called them children, as it is written, (Hoshea 11:1) " Israel is but a beloved lad."

Can the Midrash find no better words to translate the phrase telling Joshua to "be strong and courageous" other than be patience and understanding? In which way does forbearance show strength? How does courage translate as tolerance?

In the years of World War I, a young student who was fleeing the war-ravaged city of Slabodka sought refuge in Tiktin, a village near Lomza, Poland. A prodigious Torah scholar, he compensated for room and board by becoming a simple cheder teacher. He gave his lecture in a small schoolhouse, but the townsfolk were quite suspicious. There were no shouts from inside the one-room schoolhouse as it was with other teachers; the boys seemed to be listening. Rumor had it that the young man even let the children play outside for ten minutes each day in the middle of the learning session. They decided to investigate. They interrupted his class one morning and were shocked. The kanchik (whip) used by every cheder-Rebbe was lying on the floor near the trash bin. Upon interrogating the children the parents learned that this radical educator never used it. Outraged, the townsfolk decided to call a meeting with their Rabbi to discuss the gravity of the situation. Who knows what ideas a teacher who would not use the kanchik was instilling in our children? they worried.

The local Rabbi pointed to a picture of Rabbi Isaac Elchonon Spector, the leader of Lithuanian Jewry. "Do you see that picture of the Kovno Tzadik?" he asked the townsfolk. "One day thousands of homes across the world will have this young man's picture hanging on their walls." The elderly Rabbi was right. The young man became the leader of a generation, teacher of thousands and dean of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath. It was the beginning of Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky's career in education.

Moshe, the guide and architect of Jewish leadership, was empowering his disciple with a message of guidance. The words "be strong and courageous" embodied leadership of love and understanding. One can not talk of forbearance and patience without talking of strength and courage. But more important: one can not show true strength and courage if he is not patient and understanding. Good Shabbos

Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Armand Lindenbaum in memory of Nathan Lindenbaum

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Torah Insights for Shabbat Parashat Nitzavim-Vayeilech 5756

"You are standing here today, all of you...to enter into the covenant of Hashem your G-d... Not with you alone do I make this covenant and this oath, but with whoever is here with us, standing today before Hashem our G-d, and with whoever is not here with us today."

These dramatic words encapsule the special relationship every Jew has with G-d's covenant and usher in the Jew's everlasting duty to uphold it.

The Torah states unequivocally that the covenant is binding even on "whoever is not here with us today," the future generations of Israel. But how can that be? How can a person be responsible for a commitment he did not really make and never approved of?

In his commentary on the Torah, Akeidat Yitzchak, Rav Yitzchak Arama raises this question, explaining that, indeed, such a commitment should not be legally binding. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the teeth of the children are set on edge?" asks the prophet Yechezkel. "By My Name, says the L-rd,...the soul that sins - [it alone] will perish.

Apparently, there is no connection between the deeds of parents and the responsibilities of their offspring. How can a child, who does not suffer for his parents' misdeeds, be bound by their oaths?

The Akeidat Yitzchak, therefore, suggest another explanation, that "G-d's love for Israel is not dependant on the latter's material existence but is a lasting natural phenomenon so strong that it's cancellation is inconceivable." Just as nature dictates that a person would not abandon his identity, "so too is it inconceivable that this nation would ever detach itself from G-d and His laws in any manner, because this is a law of their nature which is stronger and more significant than an oath."

There is an element in the Jewish soul which is intimately connected to Hashem and to His Torah. As our Sages say "Israele, Torah and Hashem are one." The observance of the Torah's laws is not just a matter of choice but rather is a healthy expression of a Jew's deeper nature. Abandoning this commitment is as harmful to a Jew as ignoring his psychological identity or physical constitution.

This understanding of Jewish nature is in line with the rule that allows Beit Din to punish a recalcitrant husband until he agrees to divorce his wife. Though such a get should be invalid since the Torah requires that it be given voluntarily, this divorce is legitimate. Why?

The Rambam explains that deep in the husband's heart is a desire to do the right thing. Were it not for his yetzer hara holding him back, he would divorce his wife. By punishing the husband we merely remove the obstacle that prevents him from doing what he truly wishes to do.

Similarly, built into a Jew's nature is a desire to connect to Hashem and obey His laws. Only the presence of disturbing influences, which plague us as psychological barriers and distractions, prevent us achieving our spiritual potential.

This notion can well explain the return of so many Jews to our tradition and has ramifications for our work in outreach as well. The soul of every Jew possess characteristics that were found infused at Sinai and in the subconscious of every Jew, the Akeidat Yitzchak maintains, lies an awareness of the commitment made long ago. That memory is part of a Jew's being and cannot be erased without his sense of identity being lost.

Our commitment to Torah was not made by others but by ourselves. In the depth of our subconscious lies an unshakeable memory and feeling that stems from another, more enlightened spiritual age.

Rabbi David Algaze Rabbi David Algaze is Rabbi of Congregation Havurat Yisrael, Forest Hills, N.Y.

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Shabbat-B'Shabbato: Nitzavim-Vayeilech 5756

SHABBAT-ZOMET is an extract from SHABBAT-B'SHABBATO

A DOUBLE TORAH READING -- PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

by Rabbi Yehudah Shaviv

Nitzavim and Vayeilach are two separate Torah portions, but the fact that they are read together this week gives us an opportunity to compare them. For example, the end of Vayeilech is reminiscent of the beginning of Nitzavim. Compare "You are all standing today ... all men of Yisrael" [Devarim 29:9] to "The entire community of Yisrael" [Devarim 31:30]. We will base the rest of this discussion on the names of the portions, Nitzavim and Vayeilech.

The word "Nitzavim" means something that is static, without movement. On the other hand, "Vayeilach" means to go, referring to something that is on the move. The act of movement is an expression of life and vitality. On the last day of his life, Moshe "went to each and every tribe" [Ibn Ezra], "He went before all of Yisrael quickly ... showing them that he had just as much strength now as he had in the beginning" [Kli Yakar]. He did this so they would understand that his statement "I will no longer be able to come and go" [Devarim 31:2] meant "I have not been given permission" [Rashi] and not that he was physically unable to continue his role.

However, the Midrash implies that it is Nitzavim which contains an unending vitality: "Chizkiyah, son of Rabbi Chiya said: Why was this portion written close to the curses (Ki Tavo)? It is because when Bnei Yisrael heard the 98 curses in this portion in addition to the 49 curses in Vayikra, they turned their faces away, saying: Who can withstand such a scourge? Moshe called them immediately and set their minds at ease ... This is what Moshe said to them: in spite of the fact that these mishaps will befall you, you have the power to withstand. Therefore the portion starts, 'You are standing today' [Tanchuma 1].

On the other hand, Vayeilech tells how Moshe left the land of the living; his approaching death is mentioned several times. Thus, Moshe, in spite of being a man of G-d, the greatest man among giants, does not have an everlasting life, and when his time comes he will leave the world. It is the nation as a whole that will exist forever; they are stable and eternal.

Nitzavim is always read before Rosh Hashanah, and the first passage has been interpreted to refer to gathering all of Yisrael before the judge of the world. "You are all standing today before your G-d: your leaders, your tribes, your elders and policemen, every man of Yisrael" [Devarim 29:9]. This also hints at the proper path to take. If one sees himself as part of the whole, he may receive good together with all the others. This is how the Zohar interprets the words of the Shunamit to Elisha, "I dwell within my people" [II Melachim 4:13]. "I do not want to be remembered and singled out, but to be remembered as part of my nation. One who remains hidden within the nation is not singled out for punishment."

[http://www.jpost.co.il/col/col\\_main\\_0.html](http://www.jpost.co.il/col/col_main_0.html)

Thursday, September 5, 1996

**SHABBAT SHALOM: Waiting to be found** By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN (September 5) "Then my anger will burn against them and I will forsake them. I will hide my face from them and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them, so that they will say on that day: 'Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?' " (Deut 31:17-18)

Just before the final blessings at the very end of Deuteronomy, the second half of this week's double portion of Nitzavim-Vayeilech arrives with a terrible warning. God tells Moses what will happen if Jews worship other gods: As punishment, He will keep himself "hidden." And hiddenness is something we are all familiar with. In a world such as ours, one of the most common cries is: "Where is God?"

The religious answer is: "God is not dead; He is merely hidden."

One of the thorniest theological issues in any religion is how to tackle this question of a hidden God, a world in which evil people go unpunished while the good tragically suffer! In his path-breaking work Faith After the Holocaust, Prof. Eliezer Berkowitz explores this concept as it appears in the Torah. I'd like to review these in order to help us glimpse the Divine notion of justice.

The text cited above says if we sin, God hides Himself, and the more we sin, the more hidden shall the face of God become. This idea of hiddenness as punishment is very logical if we posit the mutuality of the God-human relationship; the Almighty will relate to us in direct proportion to how we relate to Him.

But there is a second aspect: The hidden face of God may also be an expression of Divine indifference. This interpretation seems most appropriate to the Holocaust, a period when we can certainly suggest that God was

"hidden" or, in more prosaic terms, He was asleep. "But it is for Your sake that we are killed all day long; we are reckoned as sheep for slaughter. Awake! Why do you sleep, O Lord?" (Psalms 44:23-24) These agonizing words could have been spoken by the victims of Auschwitz.

A third understanding of hiddenness can be found in Isaiah and is, in some way, more disturbing than even the specter of an indifferent God. "You are a God who hides Yourself, You are a God who saves them." (Isaiah 45:15). And earlier, the prophet declares: "And I will anxiously anticipate a God who hides His face... and I will hope for Him. Behold, I and the children God has given me are for signs and for portents in Israel from the God of hosts who dwells in Mt. Zion." (Isaiah 8:17)

This indelible connection between a God of hiddenness and a God of salvation is a radical - even revolutionary - idea. Strangely enough, Isaiah's vision calls for redemption as something emanating from a hidden God. What can this mean? How can we achieve ultimate enlightenment from frustrating darkness?

The Almighty created an imperfect world awaiting perfection. When will this perfection occur? When humanity learns to live in peace. At that time God will become manifest, He and His name will become one, and the world will be perfected under the kingship of the Divine.

And God created such a world because He has full confidence that His creature-partners will eventually repent and perfect it! But additionally and even ironically, His current hiddenness conceals a blessing. God is depicted in the Torah as "...mighty, merciful, and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in love and truth... forgiving iniquity and sin and transgression..." (Exodus 34:6-7) What seems to be God's willingness to overlook evil is, in actuality, His waiting for repentance to emerge from the evildoer's own volition.

The existence of evil not-yet-punished does not necessarily restrict God's goodness. On the contrary. God has ultimate faith in the fact that the evildoer will eventually return to the source of ethics and morality. God's patience with sinners is an expression of His confidence in humanity's ability to perfect itself.

An amazing text in Tractate Yoma (69b) explains that the "Men of the Great Assembly" received their title because they restored greatness to the crown of God. When Israel had been crushed under the Babylonians and Romans, Jeremiah and Daniel expressed their despair by detracting from the Mosaic attributes of the Divine.

Moses had invoked "God, great and mighty and awesome..." (Deut. 10:17) Came along Jeremiah and said: Gentiles are uprooting His Sanctuary, where is His greatness? - and he deleted "great." Came along Daniel and said: Gentiles are enslaving His children, where is His might? And he deleted "mighty." Came along these (Men of the Great Assembly) and they said: Much the opposite! This is indeed God's greatness, that He was able to overcome His instincts, that he was able to be longsuffering to the wicked. Perhaps those who destroyed the Holy Temple should have been immediately destroyed. But then we would find ourselves in a different kind of world, a world where the Divine has no confidence in human ability. God is not indifferent; He desperately wants us to perfect ourselves and so complete His world.

He appears hidden because He wants us to find Him.

A story is told about a hassidic master who came upon children playing hide and seek. When he saw one of the children crying, he stopped and asked: "Why the tears?" The child answered that he'd been hiding for the longest time, but no one had come to look for him.

The elderly Jew looked up to heaven and cried out: "Master of the universe! I know You're hiding because You want us to find You, but what happens if Your children stop looking?"

"Before it's too late, reveal Yourself."

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Riskin, dean of the Ohr Tora institutions, is chief rabbi of Efrat.

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Parshat Nitzavim-VaYelech 23 Elul 5756 Saturday, September 7, 1996

Guest Rabbi: Rabbi Dr. Chaim Wakslak Young Israel of Long Beach, NY  
The Sedra of Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh HaShanah. Sometimes, depending on when Rosh HaShanah is celebrated, Parshat V'Yelech is joined to Parshat Nitzavim and both are read together, as is the case this year. But why do we always read Parshat Nitzavim before Rosh HaShanah? Our commentators cite several reasons for this strategic placement:

(1) the Sedra of Nitzavim acts as a barrier between the admonitions (Tochacha) read each year in the Sedra of Ki Tavo and the blessing which we seek on Rosh HaShanah.

(2) The mitzvah of Teshuva which is so critical to the Yomim Noraim is presented in the Sedra of Nitzavim.

(3) The opening verse of the Sedra "Atem Nitzavim HaYom Kulchem" which is expressed by Moshe on the last day of his life so clearly characterizes the circumstances of Rosh HaShanah where each individual of Klal Yisrael stands before the heavenly court in judgement.

This Shabbat before Rosh HaShanah would generally be expected to include another custom which is traditionally observed on every Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh, that of Birchot HaChodesh (Blessing of the New Moon). Yet this custom is clearly absent in anticipation of the month of Tishrei. Once again the commentators have not failed to provide various explanations for this omission:

(1) The month of Tishrei is blessed by HaShem Himself and it is His blessing of the month of Tishrei which provides the spiritual energy for the nation of Israel to bless each of the remaining eleven months throughout the year.

(2) The Zohar explains that just as the moon begins each month as a slim sliver and gradually grows to full potential, man is called upon to follow this model and to elevate himself step by step up the ladder of spiritual attainment. This is implied by the commandment of blessing the new moon which begins with the words, "This month shall be for you" (Sh'mot 12:2). It is for this reason that we introduce each month with a blessing for success and achievement. However, during the month of Tishrei, G-d reaches down to assist man in his struggle for spiritual elevation.

This concept of G-d reaching down to assist the penitent is reflected in the very name of the month, Tishrei, whose letters represent a reversal of the normal Aleph, Bet order since "Tishrei" starts with the last letter of the Aleph Bet, "Tof", followed by the next to the last letter "Shin" and then "Resh". In contrast, man's usual quest for G-d is reflected by the regular sequence of Aleph, Bet as manifested during the "Sefira period" during which man demonstrates a traditional initiation and striving for growth and development. This period always begins during the spring season, which we know as "Aviv" a word that reflects the Aleph, Bet in proper sequence.

(3) We wish to confound the Satan so that he will be ignorant about when Rosh HaShanah will commence and will be unavailable to prosecute and diminish the merit of the nation Israel on the Day of Judgement. The last motive of confounding the Satan, is one that we find in relation to other customs and practices. For example, custom dictates that we blow the Shofar throughout the month of Elul. On Erev Rosh HaShanah, though, we do not blow the Shofar, so that we may discriminate between the blowing of the Shofar which is based only on a custom as opposed to the blowing of the Shofar on Rosh HaShanah, which is obligatory. Another reason for this practice is once again to confuse the Satan who, upon seeing that we have stopped blowing will be fooled into thinking that there will be no more Shofar blowing and will be lulled into a state of complacency.

Similarly, the number of notes and the way we divide the Shofar blowing into two sessions of Tekiot D'Meyushav and Tekiot D'Mumad are all further designs to confabulate the evil intentions of the Satan.

What seems rather amazing is that the Satan whom the Talmud describes as being shrewd, devious and most clever in accomplishing his evil designs, should fall victim to this ruse year after year. One would expect that by this time our attempts to foil the Satan would be ineffective. How can we explain this on-going attempt to manipulate the Satan and avoid his adversarial influence?

The answer to this question is actually reflected in the names of the Sedrot Nitzavim-Vayelech where "Nitzavim" means "standing" and "Vayelech" means "walking". Our Rabbis tell us that the names of these two Sedrot convey an institutional message: An individual cannot remain standing in one place. If he doesn't move to a higher spiritual plane, then he must fall. One must constantly strive to advance and move to a higher level of spiritual attainment and accomplishments. Last year's spiritual limitations, barriers and negative influences of the Satan should have been vanquished since we are expected to grow with each advancing year. This year we are again confronted with new challenges and new inferences from yet a different Satan, who is determined to deter us from the next stage of further growth and spiritual development. Thus, the Satan of last year is not the same Satan of this year. Herein lies the answer to our question, for each year we succeed in confounding a new Satan, one who because of his lack of prior experience, is totally unaware of our designs to deter his evil influences.

B"H

Torah Studies

Adaptation of Likutei Sichos

by

Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks

Chief Rabbi of Great Britain

Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion  
Nitzavim Vayelech

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NITZAVIM

Nitzavim is the Sidra invariably read before Rosh Hashanah, and it begins with Moses' address to the Jewish people, "You are standing today, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d...."

This invocation is both general and specific. It mentions the individual classes of Jew, from the "heads (of) your tribes" to the "drawer of your water." And it gathers them all into the collective phrase, "all of you."

The following Sicha is drawn from two Rosh Hashanah letters by the Rebbe. The first half concerns the relation of the individual to the community, and asks whether the Torah, in seeking the unity of the Jewish people, demands the sacrifice of individuality. The second half concerns those Jews who still live in areas of political oppression, where they are prevented from living out their faith, and asks: What can we learn from their example?

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY

The Sidra of Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah, and constitutes a preparation for it.

The Torah addresses itself to every Jew in these words, "You are standing today, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d: Your heads, your tribes, your elders, your officers, even all the people of Israel .... from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water."

This is in itself something of a contradiction. The verse begins by speaking to Israel as a unity - "You are standing... all of you" - without making any distinctions. But immediately afterwards, it proceeds to detail the different classes of Jew separately.

Why, in any case, did it need to do so, when the phrase "all of you" already encompasses them all?

It did so in order to make a fundamental point: that on the one hand, there must be unity amongst Jews; and, at the same time, each has his unique contribution to make, his own individual mission.

But, if there have to be distinctions amongst Jews, especially ones as extreme as that between "your heads" and "the drawer of your water," how can there be true unity amongst them?

The verse supplies its own answer: "You are standing today, all of you before the L-rd your G-d." It is as Jews stand before G-d in the full recognition that He is the author of their powers and the ground of their being, that they are one.

This can be seen by a simple example.



When people form a group of community for a specific purpose; economic, intellectual or whatever, they share their money or labor or ideas towards a given end and for a specified time. Outside this partnership they remain separate individuals, each with his own private world.

The community of Israel is not like this. For it is a partnership "before the L-rd your G-d" and its purpose is "that you should enter into the covenant of the L-rd your G-d, and into His oath...."

This encompasses the whole person - not just his labor or his ideas - each according to his capacity. And it is a partnership in perpetuity, as eternal as the Torah. This is true unity.

Moreover, in the efforts of each Jew playing his unique part in the covenant, is implicit the work of the whole community. The unity of Israel is created not by every Jew being the same, but by his being himself in fulfilling directives of "the L-rd your G-d." Israel is one before G-d when, and only when, each Jew fulfills the mission which is his alone.

#### THE HOUR AND THE TASK

There is a clear message in this, and one that needs emphasis in our time, concerning the "heads (of) your tribes," the spiritual leaders of the Jewish world, from the heads of communities to the heads of families.

Should the objection be raised that at the present time and in our given circumstances, it is hard for a Jew to keep his Judaism intact, without compromise, throughout the year, the Torah itself answers, "You are standing today." This is not a command or a prediction or a promise. It is stated as a fact. The fact is that every Jew stands before G-d, who is his life and his strength. The duty is to bring this fact into the open, from the potential to the actual.

And with the assurance implicit in these words, each Jew, and all Jews, come to the coronation, as it were, of G-d on Rosh Hashanah, the acceptance of His sovereignty and the proclamation of His kingship over Israel, and over all the world.

#### PROMISE OR FACT

It is their first duty, especially in this period of the Days of Awe, to spread the light of Torah and the commandments to all who come within their sphere of influence. They must make their inspiration felt in the tenor of everyday life, in practical deed. And to those groups who are, at the moment, far from contact with Judaism, they have a duty to create in them a feeling for return to the roots of their identity, and for beginning to live as complete Jews, with complete Judaism, for the complete year.

Sadly, this, the best opportunity of the year, is often missed, and the time spent instead in talking about world problems, which for all their importance are not within the sphere of influence of the speaker or his listeners, who are not at all likely to help solve them. It is particularly sad that, instead of using these moments of Jewish spiritual awakening to reinforce the Jewish community in its all-inclusive and eternal covenant with G-d and to strengthen individual Jews in their personal missions of G-d Himself, the time and energy is set aside for world problems, political discussion and other matters inappropriate to the occasion.

#### THE FOOT THAT LEADS THE HEAD

There is another point implicit in the verse, "You are standing today...." Although it distinguishes the various kinds of Jew from the "head" to the "foot" of the communal body, it must be remembered - as the Alter Rebbe pointed out - that the "foot" sometimes plays the role of the "head." For, to follow the metaphor, although the head contains the brain which directs the whole body, it is the feet which take the body (including the head) from place to place. So spiritually it can sometimes be the "drawer of your water" who serves as the example for the "heads (of) your tribes."

The characteristic of the head is that it is the seat of the mind, the intellect. The foot, however, responds to the brain's instruction; its feature is, as it were, obedience, immediate fulfillment of an imperative.

How then can the "drawer of your water" - the simple Jew with his obedient, unmediated faith - be an example to the intellectual leaders of the community? He may be gifted with neither the chance nor the capacity for studying Torah; the victim of the constraints of nature or circumstance. What does he have that can serve as the model for those who are more fortunately

placed?

And this raises in turn a further question. It is G-d Himself who has given the instruction and the imperative to each individual Jew as to how he should conduct his daily life. How then can it be that certain Jews do not have the opportunity to live as G-d wishes them to? For He is the Master of the Universe. And yet there are situations in which Jews, despite their desire, despite even their self-sacrifice, are barred from living a Jewish life in its proper fullness. A person can sacrifice himself by jumping off a roof to the ground. He cannot do so by jumping from the ground to the roof. It may be beyond his powers to raise himself from his enforced depths. How can such oppression be tolerated by G-d?

#### THE ACT AND THE DESIRE

The answer, in brief, is this. It is true that the deed is more important than the sentiment. The intention is not enough without the act. But still, feelings and intentions are significant. And when it happens that a Jew cannot act as he wishes, even by the greatest self-sacrifice, this creates in him a profound sense of grief and loss, a feeling so deep as to touch the very essence of his soul. And this leads him to a deep attachment to G-d, His Torah and His commandments, such that without this grief his Judaism could never have meant so much to him. In such a situation, not only is he without blame for failing to fulfill G-d's will, but he is rewarded for his desires even though they did not become deeds. And, more importantly, his spiritual life achieves a depth of perfection to which he in more fortunate circumstances, could perhaps not aspire.

Furthermore, when by the grace of G-d he is able to leave that situation for one which grants him religious freedom, his performance of the Mitzvot takes on an unprecedented fervor and intensity.

It is thus that such a "drawer of your water" becomes a model for the "head," and for all Jews, so that those who have been spared the "iron furnace" of affliction can learn and draw inspiration from him.

#### REAL AND IMAGINARY IMPOSSIBILITY

But there is an important point which must be made clear. The temptations by which we allow ourselves to be led astray are sometimes very subtle. And the strongest of these is self-deception and self-love.

One of its commoner strategies is when we convince ourselves that we cannot perform a Mitzvah. We would like to - we tell ourselves - but circumstances prevent us. We shift the burden of responsibility from ourselves to factors beyond our control.

"Man is close to himself" and it is difficult for him to see himself objectively. He must therefore remember that in the seemingly impossible, there may be more of what he wants to see than what is there, objectively, to be seen.

To understand the real nature of his situation he must turn to someone else, someone who is above self-deception and will not be tempted to say only what he wants to hear; someone above all, whose whole outlook is that of the Torah, for Torah is "Torat Emet" (a Torah of truth), and truth brooks no compromise. Only he can distinguish for one the constraints which are genuine from those which one has erected for himself as an escape from responsibility.

This is the time of the year - the Ten Days of Teshuvah - when the Jew "returns" to his essential self when the masks of self-deception are broken. And this essential self - that he is a veritable part of G-d above - expresses itself in all details of his daily life, in thought, speech and deed.

(Source: Letters, end of 5731, beg. of 5732.)

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#### VAYELECH

The Sidra of Vayelech is usually read on the Shabbat after Rosh Hashanah or in combination with Nitzavim.

This Sicha establishes the connection between the content in Vayelech and its place in the calendar.

The Sidra describes how Moses, having finished putting the Torah into writing, handed it to the Levites to be placed in the Ark in the Holy of Holies. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are, in another dimension, the Holy of Holies of the Jewish year.

The Sicha therefore searches out the meaning of the Holy of Holies and its

relation to the world outside. Are the holy and the profane two distinct and separate realms? Is sanctity confined to special places and appointed times?

#### THE ARK, THE TABLETS AND THE TORAH

In Vayelech, Moses commands the Levites with these words: "Take this book of the Law, and put it by the side of the Ark of the covenant of the L-rd your G-d...."

The Talmud records two conflicting interpretations of the phrase "by the side of the Ark." One maintains that the Sefer Torah was placed inside the Ark, together with the tablets on which the Ten Commandments were engraved. The other holds that it was placed outside, on a ledge which projected from the side of the Ark. Both agree, however, that it was within the area of the Holy of Holies.

Thus the Holy of Holies contained both the written Sefer Torah and the engraved tablets.

We can see that the tablets were appropriate to the Holy of Holies, because both were miraculously in space and at the same time beyond it. The Ark had physical dimensions. It was 2 1/2 cubits in length, and 1 1/2 cubits in height and breadth. And yet it occupied no space. For it is recorded that the Holy of Holies was 20 cubits wide, and yet that the Ark had a free space of ten cubits on either side. The Talmud resolves the contradiction by saying, "We have it as a tradition that the place of the Ark... is not within measured space."

Similarly the letters of the tablets, although they were letters that could be read and measured, they had no substance apart from the stone. In particular, the (final) mem and samech were preserved by a miracle. They are closed letters, so the stone which they surrounded was joined to nothing, but was kept in place by G-d. The letters, in other words, were in space but not of it.

But what was the relation of the Sefer Torah to the Holy of Holies? Its letters were written. They were ink on parchment. There was nothing miraculous about them.

#### THE HOLY OF HOLIES AND THE WORLD

The Holy of Holies contained in space and time what was above space and time. But its ultimate purpose was that this miracle should spread its light outwards, to the Priests' Court, the Court of the Israelites, the Women's Court, the Temple Mount and beyond, to all the nations of the world, to make them all aware that the Infinite may be found in the finite, that G-d dwells within the world.

Therefore, the Sefer Torah was housed in the Holy of Holies, as an intermediary between this inner sanctum and the world. For the Ark and the tablets represented complete effacement in the presence of G-d. They occupied no space: They were something become nothing. But the letters of the Torah were tangible, written in ink on parchment. Thus the Torah is the medium through which the light of G-d reaches the world which lives in time and space.

#### ROSH HASHANAH AND THE YEAR

In Chassidic thought, Rosh Hashanah has a particular spiritual characteristic. Throughout the rest of the year, we serve G-d mainly within the limits of our reason, and even the self-sacrifices we make relate to our understanding of the needs of the hour. But on Rosh Hashanah we reach a state of self-effacement which is totally beyond reason. We are not pursuing a rational objective: one which is totally beyond reason. We are not pursuing a rational objective: We are responding to a revelation from a source beyond our understanding.

This state, though it belongs to Rosh Hashanah, must not be confined to it. Throughout the rest of the year, while we live and behave within our rational framework, we must carry with us that inspiration of something higher than that which reason can grasp. It is like the Holy of Holies and the letters of the tablets: Though they had their location in space, they gave light to the whole world. And though Rosh Hashanah has its location in time, it illuminates the whole year.

#### THE PREPARATION

But for this to happen there must be a preparation. And the clue lies in the opening sentence of the Sidra we always read before Rosh Hashanah,

Nitzavim: "You are standing this day, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d: Your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers ... from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water."

Every Jew must attach himself to the community. Even the "heads (of) your tribes" must not stand aloof from the "drawer of your water." Jewish unity demands no less than "all of you."

The Jew who breaks through social distinctions to become one with the whole community, breaks through the distinctions of time as well. He brings the spirit of Rosh Hashanah into the rest of the calendar, and spreads its blessings throughout the year.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. II, pp. 407-8.)

End of Text - Torah Studies - Nitzavim-Vayelech

HALACHA FOR 5756 COPYRIGHT 1996  
SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO PARSHAS KI-SAVO  
By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

Accursed is the one who moves the boundary of his fellow... (27:17)

#### LO- SASIG: UNFAIR COMPETITION

QUESTION: Is it permissible to open a competing store or business in the same vicinity as an existing establishment owned by another Jew?

DISCUSSION: When dealing with the delicate issue of competition, the Halacha takes into account both the consumer and the proprietor. For the consumer's protection, the Halacha encourages fair competition to keep the prices down and to ensure a plentiful supply of high quality goods. To protect the proprietor, the Halacha prohibits unfair business practices and puts limits on competitors who would wish - in Halachic terms - to "enter their boundary." The following is a general description of the Halachos governing competition. In reality, however, each situation is unique. When a dispute arises, it must be brought before a local Bais Din for resolution.

Any local resident(1) may open a competing store or business, even if the two establishments are next-door to each other and the new one will cut into the old one's profits(2). The competing business may lower its prices or advertise in order to lure customers away from the existing business(3).

Although it is permitted to compete this way even L'chatchilah(4), there are some Poskim(5) who hold that it is Middas Chasidus not to ruin another person's livelihood even when permitted according to the basic Halachah. In larger cities and in growing neighborhoods, however, it is not Middas Chasidus to refrain from opening a competing business when there is room for both businesses to prosper(6).

There are several exceptions to the Halachah outlined above:

If a customer has already entered a competitor's store, one is not allowed to lure him to his own establishment(7). Similarly, many Poskim hold that it is prohibited to actively pursue a client, even a non-Jew, if the client has already built up a close business relationship with a competitor (e.g., an insurance agent with his client or a tailor with his customer(8)).

Although it is permissible to lower one's prices in order to compete, it is prohibited to lower the price drastically below the going rate. Since the intent of the drastic reduction is to drive the competition out of business, it is prohibited to do so(9).

Many Poskim hold that there is another exception to the Halacha that allows a competitor to open a store or a business. They(10) hold that this may be done only if the existing business would survive, even though it is presently losing money. If opening a second store, however, would result in putting the existing store out of business, then the second store may not open its doors. Even if the owner of the existing store has another business that could support him, and even if he is independently wealthy, it is still prohibited to compete against him if it would force this particular business to shut down completely. Although there may be other Poskim(11) who do not agree with this limitation and hold that a local resident may compete even if it

causes the existing store to go out of business, Harav Moshe Feinstein ruled clearly in accordance with the first view(12).

The Halacha stated thus far applies only to a local resident who wants to compete with an existing business. A non-resident may not compete with an existing business(13). If, however, the non-resident's competition will result in prices being lowered or in superior products being provided to the local populace, competition is allowed according to the guidelines detailed above(14).

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FOOTNOTES:

1 In certain situations it may not be clear who a "local resident" is. This is an issue for the Bais Din to decide.

2 CM 156:5, based on Bava Basra 21a.

3 CM 228:18.

4 Shu"t Chasam Sofer CM 61.

5 Shulchan Aruch Harav (Hilchos Hasogas Gevul 13), based on Rambam Hilchos Dayos 5:13.

6 Harav Yaakov Blau in Pischei Choshen (Gneiva pg. 262). Note that concerning all these Halachos, there is no difference between an observant or a non-observant Jew - Shu"t Ksav Sofer CM 20.

7 Shu"t Chasam Sofer CM 79; Pischei Teshuva 237:3. It is prohibited, therefore, for a taxi or a car service to pass by a Jewish-owned bus stop in order to solicit passengers, even if the taxi or car service is cheaper. A free ride, however, may be offered - even though that would cause a loss to the bus company - ruling of the Bais Din Machon L'ahorah, Monsey N.Y. (Maishiv B'halacha vol. 17. pg. 13.)

8 Based on Teshuvos Rashba 6:259, Rama CM 156:5 and the general consensus of the Poskim. If the competitor offers a better price, and the customer is a Jew, there are some Poskim who allow it. A Rov needs to be consulted, since there are several factors involved in this sensitive issue.

9 Pischei Choshen (Geneiva pg. 270-272) based on Shu"t Divrei Chaim 1:19; Shu"t Maharam Shik 20; Aruch Hashulchan 156:11 and other Poskim. According to the Poskim quoted later (footnote 9-10) this practice is surely prohibited.

10 Shu"t Chasam Sofer CM 61 and 118, quoted in Pischei Teshuva CM 156:3. Note that whenever competition is clearly prohibited, it is also prohibited for anyone to patronize that establishment - Pischei Choshen pg. 262.

11 This seems to be the view of Shu"t Bais Efraim CM 26-27 and other Poskim quoted in Pischei Teshuva CM 156:3. There are several Batei Dinim in Eretz Yisrael who rule this way, see Piskei Din Rabbanim (vol. 4 pg. 9; vol. 8 pg. 82). When this situation arises, there are several other factors to consider, which cannot be detailed here. A Bais Din must be consulted.

12 Igros Moshe CM 1:38 (see also CM 2:40-2) concerning a case in which members of a Shul broke off from the existing Shul and established their own Minyan. This action proved disastrous to the livelihood of the Rov of the existing Shul and radically lowered his Shul's property value. Rav Moshe ruled that it was forbidden for anyone to establish another Shul in the same neighborhood, even if their reason for breaking away was because of a difference in Nusach or style of Davening, and even if they disliked the practices of the present Rov.

13 Our discussion here centers on retail trade. Wholesale and mail order business, or a business which by its nature does not serve the local population exclusively but attracts customers from afar, may compete anywhere, see CM 156:7, Sm"a 20, and Pischei Teshuva 9. Note, also, that if there are others not under the control of Beis Din who are competing anyway, all competition is permitted - Shu"t M'harshdam CM 407.

14 Rama CM 156:7 and Aruch Hashulchan 11.

One who carefully reads the words of this week's parsha will find themselves filled with hope for a very bright future for the Jewish people. In chapter 30, verses 1-10, we find what our sages term the Parsha (topic) of Teshuva (repentance). Verse 2 states as follows. "And you will return to G-d your L-rd, and you'll listen to His voice like all that I (Moses) am commanding you today, you and your children with all of your heart and soul." Again in verse 6 it states "And G-d will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children to love G-d your L-rd with all of your heart and soul for the sake of your life." Finally, in verse 8 it states "and you will return and listen to the voice of G-d and you'll do His commandments that I (Moses) am commanding you today."

It all seems a bit redundant. Why the need for all three passages? Say it once! Rabbi Chaim Ibn Attar, the Ohr HaChaim, the 18th century author of a deep and insightful commentary on the Torah, addresses this question at length. It seems, he comments, that until the third stage (verse 8) the Jewish people had still not returned to the service of G-d in its full sense. However, how could that be, after it states "and G-d will circumcise your hearts...to love Him with all of your heart and soul?"

The Ohr HaChaim explains the following principles. Verse 2 is discussing returning and listening to G-d's voice. This refers to the learning of Torah. Through this first step comes what follows in verse 3; "and G-d will return your exiles...and gather you in from among all of the nations where G-d scattered you." Following this, G-d will circumcise our hearts, meaning that He will instill in us a love for doing what is good. Consequently, we will be repulsed by doing what the Torah forbids and cease doing such things. This is the reference to verse 6. We have explained thus far that Torah learning is the basis for any return to G-d, then resisting wrongdoing, and finally, the last step; embracing the positive precepts of the Torah. This is stated in verse 8, "and you will listen...and do all of His commandments.

The Ohr HaChaim explains basic Torah principles here. Learning Torah is the basis for building a closeness to G-d. We believe that G-d really does care about what we do, and He expects us to know what He wants from us. We can find it all in the Torah. It is the thoughts of the Creator, Who knows exactly what is good for us. Learning Torah leads us to action. We learn to avoid wrongdoing, and focus on doing what is pleasing to G-d. In these remaining days before Rosh HaShana, the Jewish new year, let's focus on ourselves, and ways we can take steps to fulfill the words of these beautiful verses in our holy Torah. May we all together merit to see them fulfilled in our days. Good Shabbos.

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- "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frاند on Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech -

Hakhel Reenacts the Receiving of the Torah at Sinai  
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This week's parsha contains the mitzvah of 'Hakhel'. Once every seven years, following the end of the Shmita year, the King gathered all of Israel (who were already in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Succos) and read to them portions from the book of Devorim.

The Sefer HaChinuch writes, concerning any person who neglects this mitzvah -- for example a Jew who fails to attend or a King who fails to read the Torah, "...their punishment is very great, for this command is a fundamental pillar of the religion...".

One would probably not have assumed that Hakhel is such an important mitzvah. 'Hakhel,' is a positive command (mitzvas aseh) that is only performed once every seven years. We might assume that Lulav or Matzah or Tefillin or Krias Shma are more important mitzvos. Yet, regarding those mitzvos, the Sefer HaChinuch does not write "and their punishment is very great...".

What significance does the Chinuch see in this mitzvah? Rav Hutner, zt"l, in a lengthy introduction to a reprint of a sefer of the Ram"o (Darkei Moshe HaAruch) gives us an insight into what the mitzvah of

Hakhel is really all about and why it is so important. He bases his thesis on two inferences from the Ramba"m.

The Ramba"m [Hilchos Chagiga 3:3] lists the sequence of the chapters in Devorim which were read at Hakhel: "From the beginning of the book of Devorim until the end of the parsha of 'Hear Oh Israel (Shma)'; then he skips to 'And it will be if you will listen (V-haya im Shamoah)' then he skips to 'You shall surely tithe (aser t-aser)' and reads from 'You shall surely tithe' in sequence until the end of the 'Blessings and Curses' until the words 'besides the Covenant which He entered into with them at Horeb' and then he stops (u'posek)".

Rav Hutner asks, why does the Ramba"m have to say the word "u'posek"? If he tells us we have to read from here to there and he tells us the last words then obviously, that is where we stop. Why does he make a point of telling us "and that is where he stops"?

A second insight: The Ramba"m in Hilchos Chagiga [3:7] refers to Hakhel as "The Day of Hakhel" (Yom Hakhel). This is a strange expression which we do not find in the Talmud. What is the Ramba"m trying to tell us?

Rav Hutner says that the essence of the ceremony of Hakhel is supposed to be the reenactment of ma'mad Har Sinai. It is the reenactment of the Kabalas HaTorah. The Accepting of the Torah is THE seminal event in Jewish History. In order to impress upon the people the importance of what Torah means to the Jewish People, every seven years we are to reenact Kabalas HaTorah. We want the people to feel as though they've gone through another Kabalas HaTorah.

A few weeks ago, here in Baltimore, we celebrated the reenactment of the Battle of Baltimore, a seminal event in American history -- the composition of the Star Spangled Banner. For Baltimoreans, and for all Americans, that is a very important event. How does one commemorate that event? How does one make it live? How does one make future generations feel how important it was "that the flag was still there?" By reenacting it.

L'Havdil, we have something that is unbelievably important to us. That is something is Kabalas HaTorah. We want our people to relive that 'Standing At Har Sinai'. How do we do that? By getting everyone together and reading the Torah.

That is why the Ramba"m says the word "u'posek". The words immediately preceding "u'posek" are "until the words 'besides the Covenant He entered into with them at Horeb (Mt. Sinai)'. We want those words to remain ringing in the people's ears! We want to conjure up lasting memories of Horeb, of Har Sinai. Therefore, the King must dramatically stop his reading right there. To read one more word beyond 'Horeb' would have diluted the impact, destroying the whole point of Hakhel. That is also why the Ramba"m refers to Hakhel as 'Yom Hakhel'. Rav Hutner points out that if we take away the vowels of 'Yom Hakhel' it is precisely the same letters as 'Yom HaKahal' (the Day of the Congregation) which the Torah repeatedly uses [Devorim 9:10, 10:4, 18:16] to refer to the ma'mad Har Sinai.

This is Hakhel -- the living and the reenactment of Kabalas HaTorah. Why? Because as Rav Sadyah Gaon tells us, "Our Nation is not a Nation except through Torah". For some, the idea that 'We Are A Nation Because of Torah' is a great novelty (chiddush gadol). There have been thousands and millions of Jews who haven't always believed that. There have been Jews who have believed that we are a Nation by virtue of a land; without a land we're not a Nation. Says Rav Sadyah Gaon, "No; We are a Nation only through Torah."

There are some people that believe we are a nation through our language. There were some people that believed that the key to the Jewish people was Yiddish -- Yiddish plays and Yiddish songs and Yiddish events. They're no longer around. The only people still around who, in fact, read or speak Yiddish are the people that they thought would never make it.

There are a people that thought we are a Nation through our culture. No! Our Nation is not a nation except through Torah. That's what makes us a people. That's what binds us together. The Standing Together at

Sinai; Accepting Torah; Learning Torah. That is what makes us Jews. The Torah, the mitzvos, nothing else. Not culture, not language, not history, nothing -- except Torah. This is what Hakhel tries to accomplish.

Mah Inyan "Fiesta Bowl" Etzel the Reenactment of Har Sinai After Shmita? [What is the connection between the Fiesta Bowl and the reenactment?]

Now we have to wonder... If the point of this mitzvah is to bring home how central Torah it is to Jews, when would we expect to schedule this event which occurs once in seven years?

I'll tell you the year in which I would NOT schedule Hakhel. I wouldn't make Hakhel after the Shmita year. That is seemingly when you need Hakhel the least.

What did Jews do during the Shmita year? What happened to an agrarian society in a year when one could not plant and sow and harvest? Jews sat and learned for an entire year. That is what the Shmita year was all about. The Jews recharged their spiritual batteries, learning most of the day. There was nothing else to do.

So, after Jews have just finished an entire year of learning and they now recall how important learning is -- is this when we need a 'Hakhel'? Is this when we have to, again, read to them the Torah? Isn't it enough that we've been learning Torah for this entire year? Now is the time when we have to learn more?

There is a lesson in this. The lesson is that one who really loves something, can never get enough of it. One may have learned the entire year, but this -- G-d says -- is when I want you to learn more Torah; it is precisely now that you can learn the lesson that there is never such a thing as getting enough of Torah, or getting tired of Torah. I hate to give this example, but come and see. "We toil and they toil..."

We know what happens on December 31 and January 1. People sit down and watch the first football game. They go to sleep, having just finished one game. Then they get up the next morning and there's the first Bowl game of the day. Then by 12 o'clock there's another game and by 4 o'clock there's another game. And then that night of January 1 -- there's another game! One has seen the Cotton Bowl, one has seen the Sugar Bowl, one has seen the Rose Bowl. Does he really need the Fiesta Bowl?

And yet millions and millions of people after having watched it an entire day want one more game. And people pay millions of dollars to advertise on that last game because they know people will watch it! Why? Because if one loves football, one can never get enough of football. If one REALLY loves something, he can never have enough. That's what Hakhel is. Hakhel says "Yidden! Torah is central to being a Jew. Our Nation is not a Nation without Torah. And we have to love it, almost be addicted to it. Even if we've had a solid year of it, still we want another vort, another shiur, another kashe and teretz, we WANT MORE -- because it is so central to our lives."

At the time of the year when we think, "how can we make next year better?" there's always one area that is open to everybody: One can always find more time for learning. That is what the message of Hakhel is -- there can never be enough of Torah Learning; because it is so central, so vital, because Our Nation is not a Nation except through Torah.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@scn.org

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<http://194.90.124.37/parsha/peninim/index.htm>  
Peninim on the Torah

Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum  
Netzavim-Vayelech  
PARSHAS NETZAVIM

It will be when all these things come upon you...then you will take it unto your heart...and you will return unto Hashem. (30:1,2) Hashem...will place all these curses upon your enemies...and you shall return. (30:7,8) When you will listen to Hashem your G-D...when you shall return to Hashem your G-D, with all your heart and all your soul. (30:10)

Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl, infers three levels of teshuvah, repentance, from the sequence of the pesukim. The lowest rung on the ladder of repentance is the teshuvah that emerges as a result of experiencing punishment. After all, you do not find many non-believers in the hospital! The pain has begun; the punishment is imminent. The reality of his wrong-doing is readily apparent. Indeed, only the obstinate and arrogant will continue to refrain from performing teshuvah. "It will be when all these things come upon you," as it begins to hurt - it is now efficacious to perform teshuvah. The middle level is the teshuvah that surfaces when one witnesses the downfall of others, be it his enemies or even his friends. Obviously, this person deserves credit for his realization that what is occurring "next door" is likely to happen to him. He notices that "Hashem...will place all these curses upon your enemies...", and his eyes open to the message before him.

The highest and most desirable level of teshuvah is represented by he who "will listen to Hashem...and...return...with all your heart and all your soul." This individual does not wait for the punishment to begin; he acts immediately - as soon as he realizes that he erred. He reflects that "perhaps" he has not lived his life in accordance with the standard set forth by Hashem. This awareness catalyzes an immediate adjustment, followed by repentance. How fortunate is he who has the insight to circumvent punishment.

(The) Life and death I have set before you, the blessing and the curse; therefore/and you (should) choose life. (30:19)

The Mirrer Mashgiach, Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl, was known as a person who approached mitzvah performance with enthusiasm and exuberance. His vitality and vigor did not wane even as he advanced in age. He truly embodied the pasuk in Tehillim 92, "A righteous man will flourish like a date palm...They will be fruitful in old age, vigorous and fresh they will be." Each of his tefillos, prayers, were the result of a unique rejuvenation. Each mussar lecture was a new experience. To listen to him was to share in the reinvigoration of his spirit. No aspect of his spiritual ritual could be termed complacent.

One of Horav Levinstein's students related that as he was taking leave of him, the Mashgiach said, "Tell our students that the Torah's imperative, "you shall choose life," is a directive which is never-ending. We are to diligently choose life, constantly seeking ways for self-improvement. The greatest danger in one's spiritual development is stagnation. One either grows constantly, or he falls behind. On the road to spiritual ascension, inertia is tantamount to failure.

PARSHAS VA'YELECH

And Moshe went. (31:1)

Moshe went. From where did he come, and to where did he go? The pasuk does not address these simple questions. He simply went! Horav S.Y. Levin, zl, distinguishes between amidah, standing still, and halichah, walking/moving. Each one has its own advantage according to the situation. Moving forward is beneficial, as long as one goes in the right direction. If one has a prescribed course and he maintains it, then the more he walks, the closer he moves to his destination. In such a situation, moving is obviously more advantageous than standing still. Conversely, when one is lost -- or if his sense of direction is misguided -- the more appropriate action is to stop and remain standing until he locates the correct path.

Human beings are required to be "mechalchim," those who move, while angels are called "omdim," those who stand still. Angels remain on the same madreigah, spiritual level, during their entire existence. They do not ascend

in spirituality and, likewise, they do not descend. Man must strive to attain greater heights. He must climb; he must constantly ascend the ladder of spirituality, never ceasing to advance further and further, higher and higher.

When is moving forward appropriate? Only when he is advancing in the right direction, when he is holeich, proceeding, on the road of Torah and mitzvos. If, however, he has erred in direction, if he has received his guidance from the yetzer horah, evil inclination, then it may be more beneficial for him to stop, to cease to move forward. This is the meaning of the pasuk in Yeshaya (55:71), "Let the wicked forsake his way." First and foremost is to refrain from continuing forward. Afterwards, one can seek new "direction" concerning the proper path on which to continue. Moshe Rabbeinu was the paragon of virtue, the paradigm of kedushah, holiness, the quintessential leader of Klal Yisrael. As he reached the climax of his days upon this world, the Torah attests to his constant movement - in the proper path. It is not necessary to state his point of origin and destination. Throughout his entire life Moshe Rabbeinu moved in a single direction - onward.

And Hashem said to Moshe, Behold your days are drawing near to die, summon Yehoshua and both of you shall stand in the Ohel Moed, and I shall instruct him. (31:14) It would seem that Hashem could instruct Yehoshua, even if Moshe's days were not drawing to a climax. Why does the Torah seem to emphasize that Yehoshua was receiving his instruction only because Moshe's life was ending? Could Yehoshua not have received his charge after Moshe's demise? The Netziv, zl, cites Chazal in the Talmud Bava Basra 75a who teach us that the zekeinim, elders of that generation, compared the "face" of Moshe to the "face" of the sun and the "face" of Yehoshua to that of the moon. The analogy is interpreted in the following manner: The moon receives its light only from the sun, since it does not have its own luminosity. So, too, the source of Yehoshua's spiritual brilliance was Moshe. We now understand the reason for specifically instructing Yehoshua prior to Moshe's death. As the moon shines only as the sun sets, so, too, Yehoshua could not shine as long as Moshe's light was in full luster.

Perhaps this analogy would serve us well in communicating the feeling a talmid, student, necessarily has for his rebbe, Torah teacher. The talmid must sublimate himself to his rebbe. He must feel that his own spiritual ascendancy reaches its zenith only as long as he renders himself insignificant. The shine/inspiration of the rebbe becomes infused in the talmid. The light permeates the student and shines through him outward to the world. If the student, however, "blocks" this light by filling himself with arrogance, he cannot serve as a vehicle for transmitting the mesorah to others.

We may wonder why it was the elders who commented about the disparity between Moshe and Yehoshua. Did not anyone else notice the apparent distinction between the two? Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl, comments that the younger men of that generation never knew Moshe in his prime so they had no way of knowing that Moshe achieved preeminence even as a young man. Thus, they felt that Yehoshua, although young and inexperienced, would attain Moshe's spiritual plateau in due time. The elders, on the other hand, remembered Moshe as a youth. They were acutely aware of Moshe's outstanding brilliance and extraordinary spiritual and moral persona. They were the ones who recognized the disparity between the Yehoshua of the present and the Moshe of the past.

When all Yisrael comes to appear before Hashem...in the place He will choose. You shall read this Torah in their ears... Gather together the people...so that they will hear so that they will learn...and be careful to perform all the words of this Torah. (31:11,12)

Once every seven years, on the first day of Chol Hamoed that followed the Shemittah year, all of Klal Yisrael was enjoined to gather together at the Bais Hamikdash to listen to the king read from Sefer Devarim. He would read pesukim that dealt with our allegiance to Hashem, the Covenant, and reward and punishment. The primary doctrine of Jewish life is the Torah. Without it, we are nothing. With it, we have the capacity for attaining the greatest spiritual rewards. Consequently, it is only proper that all Jews stand in

affirmation of the Torah. Chazal infer from the Torah's emphasis upon "so they hear" that a person who is deaf in one ear is exempt from appearing during Hakhel. The phrase "in their ears," stated in the plural, implies that the Torah must be heard with both ears. In order for the Torah to permeate one's entire essence, he must be listening with both ears.

Why is the mitzvah of Hakhel the only mitzvah which demands that one pay undivided attention to the reading -- to the point that -- he whose hearing is impaired is exempt from the mitzvah? There is a mitzvah to "hear" the sound of the shofar. Yet, no rule exempts one who does not hear with both ears. Indeed, one who is hearing-impaired is not exempt from the mitzvah of tekias shofar.

The mitzvah of Hakhel addresses the area of Jewish education and the need to inspire all Jews with Torah knowledge. In order to be successful in reaching out to the masses, it is inherent that people are listening with both ears, giving their undivided attention to the speaker. The question arises: Do we reach out to all Jews? What are the priorities in Jewish education? What about Jewish outreach? Are we to concern ourselves with those who listen with only one ear, or with those who permit the message to enter one ear and let it exit the other ear? Some Jews would like to hear, but ignorance prevents them. Others think they know everything so they are unable to hear the Torah's message. They turn a deaf ear to anything which is remotely religious. It is difficult to reach out to the individual who has no interest in listening. It is even more difficult to teach the one who blatantly refuses to listen. These people are spiritually hearing-impaired. When transmitting Torah to others, our priorities should focus upon those whose hearing is acute, whose "ears" are open to the sound of Torah knowledge, whose hearts and minds are open to inspiration.

Thoughts on the Haftarah Parashios Netzavim-Va'yelech Yeshaya 61:10-63:9 In this last of the haftaros of consolation, the navi speaks of the joyous time of the Final Redemption. Security, salvation and happiness are terms used to describe this long awaited period. It is the moment for which our nation has aspired throughout its existence. As a result of this belief, we have been able to survive the persecutions and afflictions that have been an integral part of our history. One of the most poignant pesukim in Tanach - one which should give comfort to every Jew in his moment of affliction -- is the last pasuk of the haftarah. The navi declares, "In all their afflictions He is afflicted." Hashem is distressed when His children suffer. When Hashem must impose severe judgement upon us, He is distressed with us. As a compassionate Father who must discipline His child for his own good, so does Hashem discipline us - for our own sake, so that we will be worthy of everlasting reward.

In all their afflictions He is afflicted. And an angel from before Him saved them. (63:9).

The Admor Abuchatzera zl, comments that only he who empathizes with the klal, community, can pray for them.

Praying for another Jew requires an intrinsic relationship between the two individuals. One who is sensitive to another's needs will be able to express them properly. This is inferred from the pasuk. "In all their afflictions He is afflicted." One who feels the afflictions of others is the appropriate one to pray for them. "An angel from before Him," - refers to a person who is transformed into a malach - an emissary from Hashem- in order to save the people.

As we end the year, we pray to Hashem that the words of the navi be speedily fulfilled. During the coming year, may Hashem's compassion and love be with us -- to bring an end to all the afflictions of Klal Yisrael -

Peninim on the Torah is in its 6th year of publication. The first three years have been published in book form. The third volume is available at your local book seller or directly from Rabbi Scheinbaum. He can be contacted at 216-321-5838 ext. 165 or by fax at 216-321-0588. Discounts are available for bulk orders or Chinuch/Kiruv organizations

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YESHIVAT SHA'ALVIM PARASHAT HASHAVUAH

A chumash is helpful but not essential for the understanding of this shiur. Please send any questions or comments about this shiur, or any of Yeshivat Sha'alvim's shiurim or services to <shaalvim@virtual.co.il>

Parashat Nitzavim - Vayelech: Limud Torah  
by Aaron Weiss

After repeatedly exhorting B'nei Yisrael to keep all of the mitzvot and to remain loyal to Hashem, throughout Sefer Dvarim, Moshe encouraged them not to despair, because what they need to do is within their ability. "For this mitzvah that I am commanding you today, it is not hidden from you, nor is it far from you. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, Who will ascend heavenward for us, and acquire it for us that we may hear it and do it? And it is not across the sea, that you should say, Who will cross the sea for us and acquire it for us that we may hear it and do it? For the thing is very close to you, it is in your mouth and in your heart to do it. [Dvarim 30:11-14]"

According to the Gemara, (Eruvin 55a) "this mitzvah" refers to the mitzvah which includes all the others, learning Torah. The Amoraim in the Gemara seem to be bothered by why these psukim tell us were the Torah is by first telling us where it is not. In response to this question, Rav Avdimi bar Chama relates the following drasha, which is also quoted by Rashi on the Chumash. "Why does the Torah write 'It is not in the heavens'? Because if it were in the heavens you would need to go up after it." "Why does the Torah write 'It is not across the sea'? Because if it were across the sea you would need to cross after it."

Rava and Rabbi Yochanan take another approach.

"Rava said: What is, 'It is not in the heavens'? You will not find it in one who raises his intellect over it like the heavens. What is, 'It is not across the sea'? You will not find it in one who spreads his intellect over it like the sea.

"R. Yochanan said: What is, 'It is not in the heavens'? You will not find it in those who are overly proud. What is, 'It is not across the sea'? You will not find it in those who are traveling merchants."

The statements of R. Yochanan are straight forward and easy to understand. Although the Torah "is not hidden from you, nor is it far from you", it is nevertheless possible that one's ability to learn Torah can be lost even before he attempts to learn. If a person is too proud to admit that there are things he does not know, or too proud to admit that he may be acting incorrectly, then he will never make an attempt to learn Torah. So too, if a person leads a lifestyle that demands all of his time be spent in other pursuits, then his innate ability to learn and understand the words of the Torah might as well not exist, he doesn't allow himself the chance to use it. Both types of people will not be able to devote time to learning Torah, and thus will never learn it.

The statements of Rava are more ambiguous, but it is clear that he shares R. Yochanan's approach, that some people can lose their innate ability to learn Torah before they ever get started. However, instead of dealing with those who will never attempt to learn, like R. Yochanan, Rava deals with those who do spend some, or even possibly all, of their time trying to learn Torah, but nevertheless were doomed to fail from the start.

A person with one of two attitudes is guaranteed to be unable to learn Torah even though he tries. The first is one who raises his intellect over the Torah like the heavens. This person looks down on

the Torah from what he thinks is a lofty perspective. He may think he is standing on a high moral ground, or he may be looking down from the ivory tower of scholarship. Either way, from his distance he feels he can better see the "big picture", and he therefore assumes the right to pick and choose which parts of the Torah are correct or proper, and which parts do not fit in to his world view. No matter how much time he spends learning Torah, and how many psukim and laws and sayings he memorizes, he will never learn Torah.

The second is one who spreads his intellect over it like the sea. This person also thinks that he has the big picture of the Torah, not because he is above it, but because he has crossed it from one side to the other, and knows all there is to know. Of course if you ask him, he'll tell you that there is much, much more to learn. "The Torah is as wide and as deep as the sea, however much you learn, there is always more." However, most interestingly, whenever this person learns something new, it turns out to really be something he knew already. The moral of one story is always learned from the moral of another, every perplexing statement turns out to be a restatement of the proper view, and the only correct answer to any question is one that has already been given. Much like the person who puts himself above the Torah, there is only room in his attitude to accept those parts of the Torah that agree with his preconceptions. Instead of rejecting those things that don't fit, he interprets them as things that do.

All of these people, those described by R. Yochanan, and those described by Rava, cannot possess Torah. Torah cannot be learned by one who distances himself from it. It makes no difference if the distance is practical, as in R. Yochanan's examples, or intellectual, as in that of Rava. Nor can one learn Torah if he keeps it hidden from himself; again, either practically or intellectually. The way to learn Torah is to stay close to it. One must talk about it, one must think about it, one must actively practice the mitzvot.

"For this mitzvah that I am commanding you today, it is not hidden from you, nor is it far from you. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, Who will ascend heavenward for us, and acquire it for us that we may hear it and do it? And it is not across the sea, that you should say, Who will cross the sea for us and acquire it for us that we may hear it and do it? For the thing is very close to you, it is

in your mouth and in your heart to do it."

Shabbat Shalom.

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Parshos Nitzavim - VaYelach

Selected, translated and arranged by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz

"And you saw their disgusting (graven images) and their idols . . . lest there is among you a man . . . whose heart turns today . . . to go and worship the gods of those nations, lest there is among you a root which spawns gall and wormwood." (29,16)

Rash"i explains: "And you saw their disgusting" - because they are as repugnant as disgusting creatures - shikutzim (a term used for forbidden creatures, as in VaYikra 11,10-42 DR);

"and their idols" - because they stink and are repugnant like dung (the word gilulim - idols is very similar to galalim - dung DR);

"lest there is among you" - therefore I have to make you swear an oath (not to go after them).

The Gri"z of Brisk points out that it would seem that if they saw (the idols which were) "as repugnant as disgusting creatures" and "stink and are repugnant like dung" on the contrary, who would turn to them? So why was this a reason to make them swear an oath?

We see from this that (even) if they only see idols (which are) like disgusting creatures and dung, nevertheless, since they have seen them, they

already need to be made to swear an oath, lest their hearts turn away from HaShem. Even to see them, disgusting and stinking, is not advisable, for (even) if one merely sees them, even in this state, there is a suspicion that maybe there is among them "a root which spawns gall and wormwood."

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"The hidden (matters) are for HaShem our G-d, and the revealed (matters) are for us and our children for ever, to fulfill all the words of this Torah." (29,28)

Rav Moshe Alshich (Toras Moshe) comments: In case you ask why does He, may He be blessed, make the afflictions of this world primary, to tell them that

if they abandon HaShem, they will be afflicted (with the tribulations) of this world, and their land (will be smitten), and He does not say that they will be judged (and sentenced) to Gehinnom (Hell), which is the ultimate bad. And similarly, when they do good, He tells them of the good (things) of this world, as (is written) earlier, and why does He disregard the ultimate (good, which is) the reward in Olam HaBo (Heaven).

For this reason it says "The hidden (matters) are for HaShem," and not for us, for who has seen what will be (in the next world)? Therefore it refers to the revealed matters, which are "for us and our children" so that, by this means, He may cause us to merit "to fulfill all the words of this Torah" with the correct intention. Which not be the case (if they would be exhorted) with what they do not see with their eyes.

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"For I know their (evil) inclination" (31, 21)

The Chofets Chaim (on the Torah) points out that it is similarly stated in Tehillim "For He knows our (evil) inclination." (103,14). And the wisest of all men (Shlomo HaMelech) calls it "an old and stupid king." (Kohelles 4,13) He does not mean by this that (the yetzer horo - evil inclination) is himself stupid; for on the contrary, we see that he has the ability to trap in his net even the wisest of men, and there is no righteous person in the world (who does only good and never sins).

Rather, the (reason that) he is called "stupid" is because of his craft; just as we call one who makes shoes a shoemaker, and one who sews garments is called a tailor, so the yetzer (horo) is called "stupid" because his proficiency is to make people stupid; he makes all (people appear) stupid.

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We are sorry that due to an unfortunate combination of errors and computer difficulties, the class that finally went out late Thursday was from the previous week. Enclosed is the class for the Haftorah just read.

Message from the Haftorah Parshas Nitzavim - Vayelech Yeshaya 61:10

This week's haftorah marks the climax of a seven week series of reflection on Jewish redemption. In this final presentation Hashem announces His personal return to the Jewish people. Now that every other dimension of redemption is in place the time has finally arrived for Hashem to rest His Divine Presence amongst His people. Eretz Yisroel has been revived, Yerushalayim has been rebuilt, the exiles have returned en masse, but the ultimate objective has yet to be seen. In response to this, the prophet Yeshaya quotes the Jewish people saying, "I will be gladdened by Hashem, My soul will rejoice over My G-d." (61,10) Chazal in Yalkut Shimoni (505) view the Jewish people's response to be specifically related to the return of Hashem to Yerushalayim. The Jewish people respond to all the magnificent prophecies of their glorious future and proclaim that their true source of happiness is but one, the return of Hashem to His beloved people. They sorely long for the privilege of sensing the presence of Hashem amongst them and feeling the closeness and love He has for His people. They resolve that they will be gladdened and happy only through His return to them.

The prophet continues and describes the proportions of this return

and the extent of Hashem's cherished relationship. "No longer will you be referred to as forsaken because about you it shall be proclaimed, 'My desire is in you.'" (62, 4) Hashem pledges to fully identify with His people and to display His true desire in them. His relationship with them will be so encompassing and evident that a newly gained identity will be conveyed upon the Jewish people, "Hashem's desirable one". But a worry crosses the minds of the Jewish nation concerning the nature of their forthcoming relationship. After all, weren't they previously associated with Hashem in similar proportions before being rejected by Him? If so, they reason that although Hashem will truly return to them it will only feel to them like a remarriage. Their long awaited association will have a nostalgic air to it and won't bring them the true happiness they seek.

The prophet responds and reveals to them the indescribable proportions of their new relationship. Yeshaya says, "Hashem will rejoice over you like a groom over His bride." (62, 5) The Radak explains that Hashem's return to the Jewish people will possess all the freshness and novelty of a groom to his bride. Their relationship represents the epitome of happiness and appreciation as they begin forging their eternal bond with love and respect. In this same manner Hashem's newly founded relationship with His people will possess similar qualities. It will be so complete and perfect that it won't leave room for reflections upon their past. The happiness and fulfillment that they will experience will be so encompassing that it will feel like a fresh start, a relationship never experienced before. The Radak adds an indescribable dimension to this relationship and explains that this sense of newness will actually continue forever. Instead of becoming stale and stagnant their relationship with Hashem will always be one of growth and development and will constantly bring them to greater heights. Each newly gained level of closeness will be so precious and dear to them that it will be regarded as a completely new relationship replete with all of its sensation and appreciation.

But the most impressive factor of all is that the above description is not only our feelings towards Hashem but is, in truth, Hashem's feelings towards us. The prophet says that Hashem Himself will forever rejoice over us with the sensation of a groom over His newly acquired bride. From this we discover that Hashem's feelings towards His people are literally boundless. Even after all the straying we have done, Hashem still desires to unite with us in the proportions described above. He desires to erase the past and establish a perfectly new relationship, so perfect and new that it will continuously produce the heightened emotions of a bride and groom for eternity.

These emotions are, in truth the hidden message behind the tefillin which we don each day. As we wrap the tefillin strap around our finger we recite special passages expressing our betrothal to Hashem. This experience represents our placing the wedding ring of Hashem on our finger, portraying our perfect relationship with Him. But our Chazal (see Brochos 6a) inform us that Hashem also wears tefillin. In proof of this they cite a passage in this week's haftorah which states, "Hashem swears by His right and by the strength of His arm." (62, 8) Chazal explain that the words, "the strength of His arm" refer to the tefillin worn on the left arm. The Maharsha expounds upon this concept and explains that Hashem actually binds Himself to the Jewish people. Hashem's tefillin, like ours, represent devotion and commitment, His commitment to His beloved people. Hashem cherishes His relationship with us and as an expression of His commitment to us, He also wears a betrothal band. Eventually our boundless love for Hashem will find its expression together with Hashem's boundless love for us and together we will enjoy this indescribable relationship forever and forever.

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