

LampLighter

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Nitzavim-Vayeilech
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

This week we read two Torah portion, Nitzavim and VaYeilech. The Torah portion of Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana. Indeed, its very first verse reveals its appropriateness: "You are standing this day, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d." "This day" refers to the Day of Judgment, Rosh Hashana.

On Rosh Hashana every soul, great and small alike, stands before G-d, as it states, "Your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers...your little ones, your wives...from the hewer of wood to the drawer of water."

Why do we stand before G-d? "So that you may enter the covenant of the L-rd your G-d." When all Jews stand before Him as a complete and unified entity, we become worthy of entering into His covenant on Rosh Hashana.

A covenant is designed to preserve the feeling of love that exists between two people. They establish a covenant at a time when their love is strongest, so that it will never weaken. This bond connects them to each other and ensures that their love will last forever.

So too is it with G-d's love for the Jewish people. His love for us is strongest on Rosh Hashana, as the previous month was devoted to removing our sins.

But how do we arouse G-d's desire to establish a covenant with us? By being united with one another. How are we to accomplish this, given the differences between individuals? This can be understood by the following analogy:

The human body is composed of many different limbs and organs. Some are more important, like the head; others are simpler, like the foot. But the head, no matter how important, needs the feet in order to move. The body achieves perfection only when all its limbs act in harmony.

In the same way, even the most important Jews ("your heads") require the simplest ones ("the drawer of water") in order to comprise a complete entity. And it is this unity that arouses G-d's desire to make a covenant with His people.

Our job is to achieve this unity between "head" and "foot." Every Jew must work on himself until he can recognize his fellow's unique qualities. It is beyond our capacity to judge a person's true worth. Even if one considers himself a "head" and the other fellow a "foot" (as it is human nature to inflate our own self-worth), the "head" still needs the "foot" in order to comprise a complete being.

Let us concern ourselves with correcting our own flaws and not heed the perceived flaws of others. Doing so will ensure that there is no time to look at others' imperfections!

In this manner we will achieve both self-perfection and perfection as a nation, and G-d will grant the entire Jewish people a good and sweet year.

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Choose Life

By Yossy Goldman



I call this day upon heaven and earth as witnesses. I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. And you shall choose life, so that you and your children may live. (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Do we really need the Torah to tell us to choose life? Which person of sound mind would choose death?

One possible answer is that one must make a conscious decision to *live* and not just vegetate. And I don't mean to live it up by living life in the fast lane. To choose life means to choose to live a meaningful life, a life committed to values and a higher purpose. Did it make any difference at all in that I inhabited Planet Earth for so many years? Will anyone really know the difference if I'm gone? Is my life productive, worthwhile?

It is told that when the fist Chabad Rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, wanted to bless Reb Yekutiel Liepler with wealth, he declined the offer, saying that he was afraid it would distract him from more spiritual pursuits. When the Rebbe then offered to bless him with longevity, Reb Yekutiel stipulated that it should not be "peasant's years, with eyes that do not see, and ears that do not hear, where one neither sees nor senses G-dliness."

Reb Yekutiel was rather fussy, it seems. The holy rebbe is offering him an amazing blessing and he is making conditions! Yes, he chose life and he chose to live a life that would be purposeful, productive and really would make a tangible difference. He wasn't interested in a long life if, essentially, it would amount to an empty life.

As we stand just before Rosh Hashanah, let us resolve to choose life. Let us live lives of Torah values and noble deeds. And may we be blessed with a good and sweet new year.



Sound the Shofar

Rabbi Yona Metzger
Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel

Several years ago, King Juan Carlos of Spain had invited Chief Rabbi of Israel Yona Metzger to a commemoration of the 800th anniversary of the passing of the illustrious codifier, philosopher and physician Maimonides (Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon), who was originally from Cordoba, Spain.

At the ceremony, the rabbi presented the King with a beautifully polished, long and winding shofar. The shofar had been specially fitted with a piece of silver that had the royal crown engraved upon it.

King Juan Carlos examined it carefully and inquired about its origin.

Rabbi Metzger spoke in Hebrew, while the Israeli ambassador to Spain, Mr. Victor Harel, translated his words into Spanish.

"Does this come from Africa?" he asked.

"No, your honour," the rabbi replied, "It is from the Land of Israel."

The king thought that perhaps it was used to play torero, a Spanish sport that pursues bulls through the streets, but the rabbi explained that Judaism forbids the useless harming of an animal.

"So what is the meaning of this animal horn?" the king inquired.

The king's inquiry gave Rabbi Metzger an opportunity to share an interesting chapter of Spanish history. The king listened attentively throughout the rabbi's entire, detailed

recitation of the story.

"Dear King," Rabbi Metzger began, "this unique gift helps us close a very interesting historic circle.

"Five hundred years ago, the Golden era of Spanish Jewry came to an end when your great-great-grandfather King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled my ancestors at the urging of the infamous Grand Inquisitor Torquemada. Yet many Jews remained in Spain by becoming Marranos, secret crypto-Jews who behaved outwardly as Christians, yet remained Jews privately. They observed Jewish traditions secretly, lighting their Shabbat candles where no one could see.

"These tormented Marranos would gather secretly in basements and cellars to pray on the Jewish holidays. Indeed the haunting notes of our most solemn Kol Nidrei prayer recited at the opening of Yom Kippur came from these Marranos who thereby nullified and voided their forced declarations to the church.

"The hidden Marranos prayed very intensely, but very, very quietly, so they should not be discovered, G-d forbid, by the dreaded inquisition who would torture and later burn them publicly at stake.

"But, they faced a dilemma on Rosh Hashana: They could whisper their prayers quietly to avoid detection, but how could they blow the shofar?

"One year, a Marrano who was the conductor of the Royal Orchestra, approached the king and offered to arrange a public free concert that would highlight various wind instruments from throughout the ages. Fond of music, the king approved this special concert. The conductor chose a specific day in September that happened to be Rosh Hashana.

"At the concert, the king, the queen, the royal princes, and the honourable ministers sat in the front

rows, and behind them among the concertgoers sat many Marranos.

"Various tunes and melodies were presented, and at one point the conductor introduced the shofar as an ancient wind instrument, and blew a series of notes from it.

"The king and queen thought of it as a mere curiosity, but the Marranos in attendance quietly recited the shofar blessings: 'Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who sanctified us and commanded us to hear the sound of the shofar,' and 'Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has granted us life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this time.'

"Today, dear King," continued Rabbi Metzger, "we meet 500 years later, under better circumstances. As Chief Rabbi of Israel I am very happy to come back here to Spain. I thank you in the name of our nation, that today Jews can live in your country with true freedom of religion and that on Rosh Hashana we can sound the shofar in our synagogues without any fear. Today, I can, thank G-d, overtly, not covertly, present this shofar to you because you are now blessed with a democracy. Now in Spain everyone can pray without fear."

Holding up the shofar, the king said, "Rabbi, you see I have many gifts and trophies here from around the world. But this gift carries great historic significance, and I am most grateful to you for sharing with me the shofar and the story."

Rabbi Metzger then told the king that he wished to bless him, as is commanded in the holy Bible. Both the king and the Chief Rabbi rose. Rabbi Metzger closed his eyes, and recited the blessing with deep feeling. When he ended the blessing, Rabbi Metzger opened his eyes and was amazed to see that the king's eyes were glistening.

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



The Human Being

First Day of Selichot, 5713 [1953]

On the threshold of the New Year, may it bring blessings to us all; I send you my prayerful wishes for a good and pleasant year, materially and spiritually.

Rosh Hashana marks the beginning of a new year—5714—since the Creation, a new date in the cycle of time, and everyone hopes and prays that it will also be the beginning of a new year in one's personal life, one that is "good and sweet" materially and spiritually.

It is significant that the anniversary of the Creation is not celebrated on the first day of Creation, but on the sixth, the day when Man was created. Although all other things making up our vast universe — the inanimate, vegetable and living creatures — preceded the Creation of Man, as is related in the Torah, in the first chapter of Genesis, nevertheless it is on the anniversary of Man's creation that we celebrate Rosh Hashana, and on this day we say, "This is the day of the beginning of Thy works!"

Herein lies a profound lesson for every one of us:

Man, the microcosm ("small world") contains within him all the "Four Kingdoms" into which the macrocosm, the universe at large, is divided.

In the course of his life, man passes through the stages of inanimate, vegetable and animated existence until he reaches maturity and begins to live a rational and spiritual life of a human being. Even then, in his daily life, he may experience a varied existence, as reflected in his deeds and actions.

Part of the time he may be regarded in the category of the inanimate; at other times he may vegetate, or live an animated existence; but he is a true human being when his activities give evidence of his intellect and spiritual qualities.

Moreover, the name "Adam" – "man" is justified only then, when those areas of one's life and activities which correspond to the animal, vegetable and even inanimate "kingdoms" are also sublimated, elevated and sanctified to the level of quality of a human.

Rosh Hashana, and the Ten Days of Repentance introducing the New Year, is the time for self-evaluation and mature reflection on the profound lessons of these solemn days:

Just as the world, all the world, begins its true existence, an existence befitting the purpose of its creation, from the day Man was created, who immediately after coming to life proclaimed the sovereignty of the Creator to all the universe: "Come, let us worship, let us bow down and kneel before G-d our Maker" inspiring the whole universe with this call (Zohar I, 221b; Pirkei d'Rabbi Eleazar, ch. 11), thereby making all the universe an abode for the Divine Presence and carrying out the inner purpose of the Creation,

So each and every individual must realize that his whole essence and purpose consists in the predominance of the true human element of his being and the 'humanization' of the inanimate, vegetable and animal parts of which he is composed.

It is not enough, not enough at all, if part of his time and effort correspond to the behaviour of a true human being; it is absolutely necessary that the 'man' should inspire, sublimate, elevate and sanctify all his component parts, including the animal, vegetable and inanimate, in order that they, too, respond to the call, "Come, let us worship, let us bow down and kneel before G-d our Maker." Such a life in accordance with the commands of the Creator, a life in accordance with the Torah and mitzvot which G-d, our Maker, has given us, and only such a life, justifies one's own existence, and justifies thereby also the Creation.

With the traditional blessing of K'tiva vaChatima Tova, [may you be inscribed and sealed for good]

A MITZVA A DAY

Positive Commandment 114: *Donating the Value of a Man to HaShem*

If someone wants to make a donation to a holy purpose in the service of HaShem, he may decide that his contribution will be equal to the value of a person. How can the value of a person be determined? It is not up to us to decide that one man is worth more than another! The Torah values all men equally. Set values are affixed for all men and women according to their age. This is the amount that the donor is commanded to give. This is learned out from the words (in the Torah) "If a man makes a singular vow, to give to the L-rd the estimated value of persons" (Leviticus 27:2).

A WORD from the Director

Throughout the ages it has been customary to give more tzedaka (charity) during Elul than at any other season of the year. And there's a very good reason why:

The month of Elul is a time when we return to G-d in teshuva. When we genuinely repent of our misdeeds, G-d forgives us our transgressions.

The mitzva of tzedaka has the power to hasten the atonement of sins. After we have already done teshuva, we increase the amount of tzedaka we give to "speed up" the process. This principle applies throughout the year, but it is especially pertinent during Elul, the period of introspection and preparation for Rosh Hashana.

Rosh Hashana is the Day of Judgment for all humankind. As every person truly wishes to be found worthy, we increase our performance of good deeds during Elul, the final month of the year.

However, good deeds alone are not enough to ensure that we will be exonerated. Human beings are tiny and insignificant in comparison to G-d. Realistically speaking, how valuable can the sum total of all our good deeds be, no matter how numerous, when it is G-d Who sustains us and gives us the opportunity to do them?

In truth, in order to be acquitted on the Day of Judgment, we need to be the recipient of G-d's "tzedaka"! For it isn't by virtue of our actions that we are found worthy on Rosh Hashana; it is only because of G-d's kindness and mercy that He judges us for good.

A basic principle in Judaism is that G-d behaves towards us according to our actions, measure for measure. When we share our wealth with our fellow person, both material and spiritual, G-d responds in kind by granting us an abundance of blessings.

When we give more tzedaka during Elul, G-d responds with "tzedaka" on Rosh Hashana. The scale of judgment is tipped in our favor, and He inscribes us in the Book of Life for a good and sweet year.

In the merit of our good deeds - and especially the mitzva of tzedaka - each and every one of us will be found deserving, and G-d will inscribe us together with all the righteous.

MOSHIACH MATTERS

The shofar foreshadows the jubilant proclamation of freedom, when Israel's exiled and homeless are to return to the Holy Land. It calls us to believe in Israel's deliverance at all times and under all circumstances.

(Ninth of the ten reasons that Rav Saadia Gaon gives for the sounding of the shofar on Rosh Hashana)

J.I. Gutnick

It Happened Once...



The month of Elul was drawing to a close. Everyone was getting ready for Yom Tov, and the "scent" of the High Holidays was already in the air. The marketplace was overflowing with all kinds of merchandise and produce, including the special fruits that are traditionally eaten on Rosh Hashana like pomegranates.

The Jewish section of town was bustling with activity as homes were swept from top to bottom and new clothes were fitted and sewn. At the same time it was serious business, as residents prepared themselves spiritually for the coming year. More attention was paid to praying with a minyan, refraining from gossip and in general, improving behaviour.

Inside the Baal Shem Tov's study hall the final preparations before Rosh Hashana were also underway. Prayers were recited with increased devotion, and all thoughts were focused on returning to G-d in repentance.

One evening, a few days before Rosh Hashana, the Baal Shem Tov's disciples were getting ready to pray the evening service. All that was missing was the Baal Shem Tov himself, who had yet to arrive. At precisely the appointed hour the Baal Shem Tov entered the study hall, but instead of opening his prayer book he remained standing, lost in thought.

Of course, no one dared mention that it was time to pray. The minutes ticked by and still the Baal Shem Tov seemed distracted, as if he were in another world. His holy face was suffused with intense emotion. However, the Baal Shem Tov's students were already used to such things.

When the Baal Shem Tov suddenly roused himself almost an hour later and opened his prayer book, his countenance was virtually shining with joy. That evening, the Baal Shem Tov prayed with unusual intensity and longing. It was obvious that something of very great magnitude had occurred.

After the service the Baal Shem Tov explained:

"Not very far from here," he began, "lives a Jew who grew up in a traditional Jewish home. But as he grew older, he began to associate with the local peasants. Slowly he abandoned the Jewish path till he was virtually indistinguishable from the gentiles and completely estranged from his roots."

"Many years passed. The man left the province where he was born and went to live in a totally non-Jewish environment. As time passed, he forgot everything about the Jewish way of life, its prayers and its customs. Before he knew it, 30 years had elapsed.

"Tonight," the Baal Shem Tov revealed, "this Jew happened to be visiting a Jewish town on business. As soon as he entered the village he could sense the commotion, and this aroused his curiosity. When he asked a passer-by what was going on the man answered, 'Everyone is getting ready for a holiday we call Rosh Hashana. According to Jewish tradition, it is the day on which man was created and the whole world is judged.'

"For some reason this explanation struck a chord in the heart of the assimilated Jew. Maybe it was the exclusionary 'we' that emphasized the huge chasm that separated him from his brethren, or perhaps the mere mention of the Day of Judgment. In any event, the man's soul was inexplicably awakened, and he was flooded with memories of his childhood.

"As he wandered through the marketplace he was suddenly stricken by the horrifying realization that he had exchanged a life rich in meaning for an empty existence. At that moment he looked up, and was surprised to find himself standing outside the main synagogue. By then it was almost dark, and people were arriving to pray the evening service.

"The man was seized by an overwhelming desire to join them, but he was also embarrassed by his non-Jewish appearance. In the end the urge to pray won out, and he went into the women's section and hid behind the curtain.

"As the cantor chanted the words 'And He atones for sin...' a shudder passed through the man's body. How he wished to pray, but the words were long forgotten. Tears streamed down his cheeks. When the last congregant had gone home he couldn't bear it any longer and burst out crying. 'Master of the universe!' he wept. 'I know there is no greater sinner than I, but I also know that You are merciful and full of loving-kindness. Heavenly Father, forgive me my transgressions and I will sin no more. I wish to return to You and live as a Jew. Please accept my prayer and do not turn me away!'

"The man's heartfelt repentance caused a great commotion in the celestial realms," the Baal Shem Tov explained, "and his prayer ascended to the very Throne of Glory. In fact, it was so powerful that it brought along with it many other prayers that had been waiting hundreds of years to ascend.

"When I sensed what was going on in the man's heart," the Baal Shem Tov concluded, "I decided to wait for him to pray so I could join him. Tonight's service was delayed so we could merit praying with a true penitent..."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

Our patriarch Abraham... (Ethics 5:3)

Just as a father bequeaths his estate to his descendants, Abraham bequeathed his spiritual legacy to every Jew. This legacy gives us the strength to withstand the challenges we face in our Divine service. (*Sichot Parshat Chukat*)

Ten miracles were performed for our forefathers in Egypt... (Ethics 5:4)

Pirkei Avot is intended to teach us pious conduct. What is the lesson learned from the above statement? When the Jews in Egypt witnessed the miracles performed on their behalf, they became aware of their true identity. Although they were in exile, they knew that they were servants of G-d rather than the Egyptian's slaves. Although we are still in exile, we are G-d servants, answerable to Him before any other authority. (*The Rebbe*)

There are four types of temperaments: He who is easily angered and easily pacified his loss is cancelled by his gain... (Ethics 5:14)

The Talmud teaches: When any person gives way to anger, if he is wise, his wisdom leaves him; if he is a prophet, his power of prophecy leaves him. And even if greatness was decreed for him from Heaven, whosoever becomes angry will be degraded. Conversely, says the Talmud, among those whom the Holy One loves are a man who does not become angry as a rule, and one who will overlook irritating causes for retaliation. (*Talmud, Pesachim 66b, 113b*)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS NITZAVIM - VAYEILECH 23 ELUL • 12 SEPTEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	5:48 PM
	MINCHA:	5:50 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	6:30 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	MINCHA:	5:30 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	6:46 PM
	SELICHOS:	12:20 AM
WEEKDAYS:	SELICHOS:	8:30 AM
	SHACHARIS SUN – FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	6:00 PM
	MAARIV:	6:50 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 11 SEPTEMBER 2009



BEGINS	ENDS
5:48 MELBOURNE	6:46
5:45 ADELAIDE	6:41
5:20 BRISBANE	6:14
6:25 DARWIN	7:14
5:19 GOLD COAST	6:16
5:48 PERTH	6:42
5:25 SYDNEY	6:21
5:39 LAUNCESTON	6:40
5:49 AUCKLAND	6:47
5:47 WELLINGTON	6:47
5:33 CANBERRA	6:29

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

זצוקלה"ה נב"מ ז"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty to redeem His people speedily in our days.