

Parashat Nitzavim, which is always read on the *Shabbat* before *Rosh Hashanah*--sometimes, as this year, together with *Parashat Vayeilech*, and sometimes alone--is the *Parashah* of *Teshuvah* and of *Mashiach*. We read, for example (30:2-3), "You will return to *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, and listen to His voice, in accordance with everything that I command you today--you and your children, with all your heart and all your soul. Then *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, will bring back your captivity and have mercy upon you, and He will gather you in from all the peoples to which *Hashem*, your *Elokim*, has scattered you."

R' Yisrael Eliyahu Weintraub z"l (1932-2010; Bnei Brak, Israel) writes: There is a verse earlier in the *Parashah* which describes what mankind will look like in the generation before the final *Teshuvah* and the coming of *Mashiach*. We read (29:17-18), "Perhaps there is among you a man or woman, or a family or tribe, [who], when he hears the words of this curse, will bless himself in his heart, saying, 'Peace will be with me, though I walk in the way my heart sees fit.'" Walking in the way "my" heart sees fit, being completely self-centered, and demanding that everything be the way "I" want it to be characterizes that generation, R' Weintraub writes.

That attitude is the polar opposite of the purpose for which man was created, R' Weintraub continues. We were created to struggle, as the *Gemara* (*Berachot* 5a) comments on the verse (4:5), "*Rigzu* / Tremble, and sin not." The *Gemara* says: "A person should constantly *Yargiz* / incite the *Yetzer Ha'tov* against the *Yetzer Ha'ra*." It is through challenges that a person proves his loyalty to *Hashem*. - **Continued in box inside** -

Rosh Hashanah

"Blow the *Shofar* at the moon's renewal, at the time appointed for our festive day. Because it is a *Chok* / decree for *Yisrael*, a judgment [day] for the *Elokim* of Yaakov." (*Tehilim* 81:4-5)

R' Azariah Figo z"l (1579-1647; Italy) writes: According to my limited understanding, this verse means the following: It is strange and even illogical to imagine G-d sitting in judgment--in particular, that He has a special day when He does this. Given His unbounded wisdom and knowledge, why does He need this? In an instant, He can see who in the world is innocent and who is guilty! Does He need, G-d forbid, to hear the testimony of witnesses and the arguments of lawyers? Such a thing should not even be said!

In short, we cannot understand why *Hashem* established a Day of Judgment. It follows that when we "blow the *Shofar* at the moon's renewal" to announce the impending judgment, we cannot fathom the purpose of that either--*i.e.*, why there is a "time appointed for our festive day." Rather, "it is a *Chok* / decree for *Yisrael*"; we do not know why there is "a judgment [day] for the *Elokim* of Yaakov," for He does not need such a day. We simply accept that that is what He decreed in His infinite wisdom.

R' Figo adds: While the true nature of the day of *Rosh Hashanah* is hidden from us, we can say on a simple level that *Hashem* announces when He judges us so we can prepare for that judgment and be acquitted.

(*Binah L'ittim: Drush Et Mishpat*)

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring

10815 Meadowhill Road, Silver Spring, MD 20901 / 301-775-9623

Send e-mail to: TheTorahSpring@gmail.com

Back issues at: www.TheTorahSpring.org

Donations to *Hamaayan* are tax deductible.

Donate online: <https://www.paypal.com/US/fundraiser/charity/1234402>



Sponsored by

the Greengart and Lerman families

in memory of their father, Zvi ben Ben Zion a"h

(Harry Greengart)

Nancy & David Broth and Rona & Aaron Lerner

in memory of their mother, Elinor Cohn a"h

Mrs. Loretta Sadwin

on the *yahrzeit* of her father

Alter Eliezer Yitzchak ben Litman a"h

“But I will surely conceal (literally, ‘Conceal, I will conceal’) My face on that day . . .” (31:18)

R’ Nachman of Breslov z”l (1772-1810; Ukraine) writes: There are two ways that *Hashem* can conceal Himself. He explains:

When *Hashem* conceals Himself behind one layer of concealment, it is difficult to find Him. Nevertheless, as long as one knows that *Hashem* is hiding, one can successfully search for Him. The knowledge that *Hashem* is concealing Himself informs and motivates a person to make the necessary effort to connect with *Hashem* despite His concealment.

However, when *Hashem* conceals Himself within concealment, it is impossible to find Him. Concealment within concealment means that He is hiding from us the fact that He is, so-to-speak, unavailable to us, so that we do not know to make the extra effort to search for Him. This is what our verse is speaking of: *Hashem* will conceal His concealment, writes R’ Nachman.

R’ Nachman adds: In reality, despite *Hashem’s* concealment--even when He is concealed within concealment--He is certainly present everywhere, for without the life force that He gives everything, nothing would exist.

(*Likkutei Moharan* 1 56:3)

~We wish our readers a Ketivah Va’chatimah Tovah!~

- Continued from front page -

R’ Weintraub writes further: *Rosh Hashanah* is closely associated with our Patriarch Yitzchak--as is evident in the Torah readings, the many references to *Akeidat Yitzchak*, and especially the blowing of the *Shofar*, which recalls the ram that was offered in Yitzchak’s place. Unlike Avraham, who is associated with the trait of *Chessed* / kindness, Yitzchak is associated with *Din* / strict justice. Yitzchak reminds us that there is a Judge who judges every last detail of our behavior.

But there is a deeper aspect to Yitzchak and *Din*: Yitzchak’s contemporaries feared him because of his association with G-d’s Justice. Thus, for example, Avimelech, the king of Gerar, drove Yitzchak away. But then, Yitzchak struck it rich, and Avimelech suddenly wanted to be his friend again, as described in *Parashat Toldot*. Yitzchak’s success shows that, in fact, *Din*, living a life of accountability, brings happiness; living life like it is a free-for-all--“I walk in the way my heart sees fit”--does not bring happiness. It follows, writes R’ Weintraub, that the Days of Judgment are not days to run away from, but rather to embrace, for ultimately, a life of *Din* can bring us success and happiness.

(*Nefesh Eliyahu: Ma’amarei Chodesh Ha’shevi’i* p.27)

“You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your Elokim--the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers--all the men of Yisrael; your small children, your wives . . .” (29:9-10)

Rashi z”l writes: Why is this verse juxtaposed to the curses in last week’s *Parashah*? Because when *Yisrael* heard those 98 curses--on top of the 49 curses in *Vayikra* (ch.26)--their faces turned pale, and they exclaimed, “Who can possibly withstand these?!” Therefore, Moshe reassured them: “See, you are standing today before *Hashem*!” You already provoked the Omnipresent to anger many times, yet He has not destroyed you and you continue to stand before Him. [Until here from *Rashi*]

Given that *Bnei Yisrael* were terrified by the curses, it is, at first glance, surprising that Moshe continues (in verses 17-18), “Perhaps there is among you a man or woman, or a family or tribe, [who], when he hears the words of this curse, will bless himself in his heart, saying, ‘Peace will be with me, though I walk in the way my heart sees fit.’” How, asks R’ Chaim Friedlander z”l (1923-1986; *Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva), does a person who believes in the Torah’s warnings come to convince himself that he can sin and escape any consequences?

R’ Friedlander explains: The Torah is describing a person for whom the statement, “I walk in the way my heart sees fit,” is a personal philosophy or mantra. Such a person lets his desires rule over his intellect, such that he is incapable of seeing the contradiction between believing in the Torah’s warnings and assuring himself that he is immune from them.

How does such a person repair his ways? R’ Friedlander answers: This is possible only by accepting upon himself to listen to every word, without exception, of the *Mussar* / rebuke and ethical teachings of the Sages. In an instant, writes Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z”l (1210-1263; Spain) in his work *Sha’arei Teshuvah*, a person who does this moves from darkness to light. Not only that, but a person who resolves to listen to what the Sages teach is considered to have performed everything he learned even before he has actually done so in practice. This is learned from the verse (*Shmot* 12:28), “*Bnei Yisrael* went and did as *Hashem* commanded Moshe and Aharon, so they did.” In reality, they did not fulfil the command, which was to offer the *Korban Pesach*, until four days later. Nevertheless, the Torah describes *Bnei Yisrael’s* acceptance of Moshe and Aharon’s words as if they had acted immediately. R’ Friedlander explains: Until now, this person was someone who did as he pleased. Now, he is a person who subjugates his will to the teachings of the Torah and its scholars. This makes him a completely different person.

R’ Friedlander adds: This trait--“I walk in the way my heart sees fit”--is found to some degree in every person. Therefore, the study of *Mussar* also is needed by every person.

(*Siftei Chaim: Mo’adim* I p.41)