

# OHR NET

Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim-Vayelech • For the week ending 23 Elul 5756 • Sept. 7, 1996 • Vol. 3 No. 42

## 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

## INSIGHTS

feel, through osmosis, the importance of 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 *mezuza* 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 *mezuza*. Otherwise they will grow up thinking that you can put the *mezuza* 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 *mezuza*. 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 Nissan Wolpin in the *Jewish Observer*

## 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

### NITZAVIM

**O**n 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

**O**n 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 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.

## OVERVIEW



INSIGHTS INTO THE SHABBOS ZEMIRO

יום זה מְכֻבָּד

“THIS DAY IS HONORED...”

“Six days you shall do your work and the seventh is for your G-d”

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 Torah) offers this fascinating insight which he heard in the name of Rambam: 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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## KNOW WHEN TO BLOW

Aaron Ahuvia

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wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Rosh Hashanah will soon be with us, and this year we will not be blowing the shofar on the first day because it is Shabbat. I would like to understand more deeply why we have this custom. Is it because we don't use ritual objects on Shabbat? But we read from the Torah on Shabbat? Or is forbidden like other musical instruments, since if they break you might come to fix them? But how likely is it that a shofar will break?

Dear Aaron Ahuvia,

You're right, there's no prohibition against using 'ritual objects' on Shabbat. As you said, we read the Torah scroll on Shabbat.

Is the shofar forbidden on a 'Shabbat Rosh Hashanah' because of the prohibition against musical instruments? That can't be the only reason, and here's why not:

True, on a regular Shabbat, musical instruments — including shofars — are forbidden. But musical instruments are forbidden on Rosh Hashanah, too! So obviously, the mitzva of blowing shofar on Rosh Hashanah is an **exception**; otherwise, the mitzvah of shofar could never be fulfilled.

Rather, the reason is as follows: Everyone wants to fulfill his obligation to hear the shofar, but not everyone knows how to blow the shofar. Someone might bring his shofar to an expert to learn how, and thereby accidentally desecrate Shabbat by carrying the shofar outside.

Now, back to your original question: What's the difference between blowing a shofar and reading the Torah scroll? Someone might desecrate

Shabbat by bringing a Torah scroll to a learned person to read it for him!

One difference is that the mitzva of shofar can be fulfilled alone, whereas the public Torah reading on Shabbat is, well, public: You need ten people to read it. The more people there are, the less likelihood anyone will accidentally transgress Shabbat, because the others will remind him. Also, due to the extreme holiness and honor of a

Torah scroll, a person thinks twice before picking it up and carrying it outside.

I once heard a beautiful idea which can be learned from this Rabbinic decree, an idea especially appropriate for Rosh Hashanah:

One might ask: "How often will it happen that someone forgets it's Shabbat and carries a shofar outside?"

Not very often.

"How learned is the person for whom the Sages made this decree?"

Not necessarily so learned.

"And how Jewish is the community in which this person lives?"

Not too very. There's not even a synagogue where he can go to hear the shofar blowing.

Nevertheless, the Sages of Israel forfeited their own mitzva — sacrificing their own spiritual elevation and that of the entire nation — for the sake of some simple, perhaps unlearned Jew, living far from the hub of any major Jewish community. They cared about him, concerned that he, too, keep Shabbat properly. **This highlights the inseparable connection shared by all Jews, that we should care about each other and unite as one people.**

As to your question, "How likely is it that a shofar will break?" I don't know, but it so happens that last year on Rosh Hashanah my shofar broke. I fixed it after Rosh Hashanah by soaking it in boiling water until it softened, then repaired it and let it harden!

Sources:

- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 588:5, Taz, Mishna Brurah 13
- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 143:1
- Ran on Tractate Rosh Hashana ch. 4.
- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 135:14

## Yiddle Riddle

Last week we asked:

Which tractate's name is the antonym of the name of the Order (*sefer*) of which it is part?

Answer:

'Chullin,' the tractate whose name means 'non-holy things' is part of the order 'Kodshim,' — 'holy things.'

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CASE OF THE MISSING AGENT

THE CASES:

• Case 1

A man appoints an agent to slaughter an animal for him. He later finds the animal slaughtered but does not know whether the agent, a qualified *shochet*, or someone else perhaps unqualified, did the *shechita*.

• Case 2

A man appoints an agent to tithe his grain for him. He later finds the grain tithed but does not know if the agent whom he appointed did it or someone else whom he did not appoint.

THE RULING:

In Case One we consider the *shechita* valid. In Case Two he must tithe again.

THE PROBLEM:

If we assume that an agent always carries out his mission, then the tithing should also be valid. If we do not assume this then the *shechita* should be invalid. What is the logic of distinguishing between the two cases?

THE RESOLUTION:

The question of whether we may assume that an agent has carried out his mission is already dealt with in a number of places, especially in Gittin 64 where it is applied to situations where agents have been appointed to effect marriage or divorce. The conclusion is that there is a doubt as to whether we can assume that an agent has completed his mission and we therefore deal stringently in such situations, as we do in all cases of Torah law where there is a doubt. If a man should appoint an agent to contract marriage with an undesignated woman and the agent dies before returning to him, that man will be forbidden to marry any woman in the world lest she be the forbidden relative of the mysterious woman whom the agent married for him. On the other

hand, if he delegated an agent to deliver a divorce document to his wife and this document is not in her possession but she claims she received and subsequently lost it, we do not assume her to be divorced. In both cases everything hangs on the assumption that the agent has completed his mission. Since this assumption is doubtful we only apply it for stringency, as in the first case of marriage, but not for leniency, as in the second case of divorce.

In our own problem of *shechita* and tithing we use the same approach. We are in doubt as to whether the agent carried out his mission to do the *shechita*. But even if we assume that someone else overheard the owner's order and did the *shechita* without being appointed we rule that the *shechita* is valid because

were always near the Sanctuary so there was yet no ban on eating the meat of an animal which had been killed in any manner.

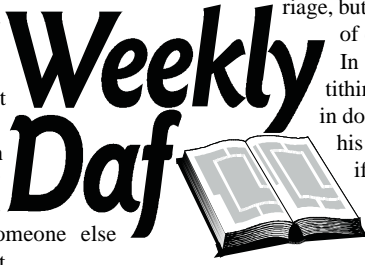
Rabbi Yirmiyahu poses an interesting question. If someone had parts of an animal which was killed not through *shechita* with him when Jews first entered Eretz Yisrael was he permitted to eat them?

Rashi views this as a purely academic contemplation as to what happened, with no practical relevance. Rabbi Asher (Rosh) challenges this approach because the Talmud indulges in academic contemplations for the explanation of Torah passages, but not for speculation about what happened historically. He suggests, instead, a practical application. If someone took upon himself a vow not to eat from a certain species after a given date, will he be permitted to eat from the supply he had been eating from until that date once the date has arrived?

One of the great Chassidic leaders, the author of "Bnei Yissaschar," quotes a scholar who suggested another parallel to Rabbi Yirmiyahu's question. If someone had meat left over from his Shabbos meals, will he be permitted to eat it the next day even though it is in the Nine Days before the Fast of the Ninth of Av in which eating meat is forbidden?

This comparison is, however, challenged by the Bnei Yissaschar. In the case of Rabbi Yirmiyahu there is no inherent problem with meat of a dead animal. It is only the mitzvah of *shechita* which renders non-kosher all meat from an animal otherwise killed. Therefore there is room for assuming that meat from an animal put to death before the mitzvah came into effect remains permissible to eat. Regarding the Nine Days, however, the ban on eating meat stems from the need to mourn for the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash which took place on the Ninth of Av, so there is, therefore, no logic in assuming that one can relax this mourning simply because he has meat left over from a time when it could be eaten.

• Chullin 17a



Insights, explanations and comments for the seven pages of Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle.

most people who undertake *shechita* are qualified to do so. The fact that he has not been appointed is irrelevant to the validity of this act to the owner of the grain or someone he has appointed as his agent. Since there is doubt as to whether the agent carried out his mission, and anyone else's tithing is invalid, we therefore rule that the grain is still considered untithed.

• Chullin 12a

QUESTION MARK LEFTOVERS

When was the command of *shechita* first in effect?

From the time the Jews entered Eretz Yisrael, says Rabbi Akiva, "When the place which Hashem, your G-d, has chosen to place His name upon is distant from you," says the Torah (Devarim 12:21), "You will slaughter from your cattle and your sheep." While they were in the Wilderness they

NITZAVIM

1. What is the connection between the verse "Atem nitzavim" and the curses in the previous *parsha*?
2. Who are the wood-choppers and water-carriers?
3. Why can Hashem never 'swap' the Jewish people for another nation?
4. One who ignores the Torah's warnings "adds drunkenness to thirst (29:18)." What does this mean?
5. What two cities were destroyed along with S'dom and Amorah?
6. "The hidden things are for Hashem, our G-d, and the revealed things are for us...." What does this mean?
7. According to Rashi, how will the day of the ingathering of the exiles be 'great and difficult'?
8. Where is the Torah 'not to be found'? Where is it to be found?
9. When and where did the Jewish People become culpable for each other's sins (*areivim zeh lazeh*)?
10. How do the earth and sky remind us to keep the mitzvot?

VAYELECH

1. Moshe said, "I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to go out and come in..." How do we know that this does NOT refer to physical inability?
2. Which of Moshe's statements to Yehoshua was later contradicted by Hashem's command?
3. Why does the Torah (31:10) refer to the Sukkot of the eighth year as though it occurred during the *Shemita* year?
4. Why does the Torah command that babies be brought to hear the Torah being read?
5. What does it mean that Hashem 'hides His face' from the Jewish People?
6. What function does the song Ha'azinu serve?
7. Which verse promises that the Torah will never be totally forgotten from the Jewish People?
8. What is the difference of opinion regarding the placing of the Torah scroll which Moshe gave the Levi'im?
9. On the day of Moshe's death, he didn't gather the people by blowing trumpets as he normally would have. Why not?
10. Moshe said "For I know that after my death you will act corruptly...(31:29)," but, in fact, this didn't occur until after Yehoshua's death. What does this teach us?



I Didn't Know That!

The first letters of the words 'Mi Ya'aleh Lanu Hashamaimah' who will go up to the heavens for us? spell 'mila' (circumcision). The last letters spell Hashem's name. *Bris Mila* prepares a person for his heavenly climb towards G-dliness.

• Ba'al Haturim (30:12)

Bonus Question ?

A covenant was made between Hashem and "those standing here with us today, in front of Hashem, our G-d, and those NOT here with us today (i.e., future generations)." How can future generations be obligated by a covenant which they never entered into?

Answers on back page

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

**NITZAVIM**

1. 29:12 - The Jewish People asked, "Who can survive such curses?" Moshe comforted them, saying, "You've done a lot to anger Hashem, and yet 'atem nitzavim' Hashem didn't destroy you ... you're still standing before Him."
2. 29:10 - Canaanites who joined the Jewish People under false pretenses.
3. 29:12 - Because Hashem swore to their ancestors that He would never do so.
4. 29:18 - He causes Hashem to reckon his unintentional sins along with his intentional ones, punishing him for all.
5. 29:22 - Admah and Tsevoyim.
6. 29:28 - There is collective culpability only for 'open' sins, but not for 'hidden' ones.
7. 30: 3 - It will be as if Hashem needs to take each individual by the hand and lead him out of exile.
8. 30:12-15 - The Torah is not found in heaven nor across the ocean. Rather, it is "...very

close to you, in your mouth and in your heart to do it."

9. 30:28 - When they crossed the Jordan and accepted the oath on Mt. Eval and Mt. Grizim.
10. 30:19 - The earth and heavenly bodies



although receiving neither reward nor punishment - always 'obey' Hashem's will. How much more should we who stand to receive reward or punishment obey Hashem.

**VAYELECH**

1. 31:2 - Because verse 34:7 says "His (Moshe's) eye never dimmed, and his (youthful) moisture never departed."
2. 31:7 - Moshe told Yehoshua to share his lead-

ership with the Elders. Hashem later commanded Yehoshua to rule alone.

3. 31:10 - Because the halachos of the seventh year (*Shemita*) still apply to the harvest.
4. 31:12 - To give reward to those who bring them.
5. 31:17 - He ignores their distress.
6. 31:21 - It warns what will befall the Jewish People if they abandon Torah.
7. 31:21 - "...For it (the Torah) will not be forgotten from the mouth of their offspring..."
8. 31:26 - Whether it was placed outside but adjacent to the Ark, or inside, next to the Tablets.
9. 31:28 - Blowing the trumpets was an expression of Moshe's dominion, and "There is no dominion on the day of death. (Koheles 8)
10. 31:29 - That a person's student is as dear to him as himself. As long as Yehoshua was alive, it was as though Moshe himself were alive.

**Recommended Reading List**

<b>Ramban</b>	30:6	Cleaving to Hashem
29:18 Refusing the Covenant	30:9-10	Our Own Merit
29:28 Accidental Sins	31:18	Hiding of Hashem
31:1 Bidding Farewell		<i>Sefer Hachinuch</i>
31:2 Loss of Knowledge	612	The Gathering
<b>Sforno</b>	613	Writing a <i>Sefer Torah</i>
29:18 Denying the Curse		

**Bonus Answer!**

The souls of all future generations, although not physically "*here with us today*", exist nevertheless "*in front of Hashem, our G-d*." These yet unborn souls entered the covenant, along with the rest of the Jewish People.

• *Kli Yakar*

**HAFTORAH: Yeshayahu 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*

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