

## Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim Nitzavim 5772-Rosh HaShanah 5773

(From the archives)

### Shabbos in the Parasha

This week is Parashas Nitzavim, which will be followed this coming week by Rosh HaShanah. The general approach to Rosh HaShanah is that it is a day of judgment, when HaShem judges the whole world and decides what will be the outcome for the coming year. It is difficult, however, for a person to feel like he is being judged when he cannot see the judge and is uncertain of what actions he performed in the past that require judgment. When one commits a felony, he is aware of his crime and he usually has an idea of what is in store for him regarding his punishment. Regarding the Heavenly judgment, however, one has performed so many actions in the past that it is virtually impossible to recall what he did right and what he did wrong. Furthermore, it is impossible for a human to grasp the depth of the Heavenly judgment, as it is said (Tehillim 36:7) *mishpatecha tihom rabbah*, Your judgments are like the vast deep waters. Additionally, the main theme of the day on Rosh HaShanah is prayer, as we declare HaShem's kingship and pray for our materialistic needs. How do we reconcile the idea that on the one hand, we are standing in judgment, and on the other hand, we are given the opportunity to pray for our lives and our sustenance? In order to gain insight into the essence of Rosh

HaShanah, it is worth examining a Gemara that sheds light on this matter. The Gemara (Rosh HaShanah 16b) states: Rabbi Yitzchak said: a year that is impoverished in the beginning will be wealthy at the end, as it is said (Devarim 11:12) *mereishis hashanah*, from the beginning of the year. The word *mereishis* is written without an aleph, thus the root word is from the word *rash*, meaning poor. It is said further in that verse *viad acadharis*, and until the end, and this denotes that there is an end. Rashi and Tosfos explain that the Gemara means to say that when the Jewish People make themselves like poor people on Rosh HaShanah, supplicating before HaShem, HaShem has compassion on them and favors them. One must wonder, however, why the Gemara deemed it necessary to quote a verse that appears to be unrelated to Rosh HaShanah, and derive this idea from the fact that the word for beginning is spelled without the letter aleph. I would like to suggest a novel approach to explain this Gemara. We refer to the upcoming holiday as Rosh HaShanah, which is literally translated as the head of the year. I once heard someone explain that the reason why this day is referred to as the "head" of the year is because the head is the most important organ of the body. Similarly, our future is dependent on Rosh HaShanah. What are we supposed to be thinking about on

this most significant day? We are required to declare HaShem as king, and we accomplish this by blowing the shofar. The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 3:4) writes that although the mitzvah of shofar is mandated by the Torah, there is also a rationale to blowing the shofar. The sound of the shofar is meant to arouse us from our slumber and to exhort us to repent from our evil ways. Thus, on Rosh HaShanah, we are required to take a second look at ourselves and see how we fit into HaShem's Master Plan. In order for one to offer himself an objective perspective of his alignment with HaShem's will, it would be prudent for one to become as close as possible to HaShem. How does one become close to HaShem? Scripture offers us the answer to this dilemma. It is said (Yeshaya 57:15) *ki choh amar ram vinisa shimo marom vikadosh eshkon vies daka ushfal ruach lihachayos ruach shefalim ulihachayos leiv nidkaim*, for thus said the exalted and uplifted One, Who abides forever and Whose Name is holy: I abide in exaltedness and holiness, but I am with the despondent and lowly of spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the despondent. The Gemara (Sota 5a) offers a homiletic interpretation to the words *es daka*. One opinion maintains that the words can be read *iti daka*, with Me is the humble one, which Rashi explains to mean that HaShem is declaring, "I elevate the humble one until he resides with Me. The second opinion maintains that the words can be interpreted to mean *ani es*

*daka*, that HaShem, so to speak, lowers His Presence to the one who is humble. According to both opinions, however, one who is humble is deemed to be with HaShem. Armed with this perspective, we can gain a better understanding into this Day of Judgment. On Rosh HaShanah one must demonstrate true humility. A true king is not one who lords it over his subjects. Rather, the real king is one who acts with humility. HaShem Himself is humble, as depicted in the verse in Yeshaya and in numerous statements in the Gemara and Medrash. Hashem desires that we emulate His ways, and when we act in a humble fashion, then we can be close to HaShem. With this premise we can better understand the verse that states (Tehillim 36:7) *tzidkasecho kiharirei kel mishpatecha tihom rabbah adam uviheimah toshia HaShem*, Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains; Your judgments are like the deep vast waters; You save both man and beast, O HaShem. The Gemara (Chulin 5b; see Rashi Ibid Tehillim) explains that the verse refers to those who are cunning in knowledge, and yet they still humble themselves like an animal. Perhaps it is for this reason that Scripture juxtaposes the idea of judgment to the idea of humility. If one wishes to gain a glimpse into the ways of HaShem's judgment, one must humble himself, and then he will be with HaShem. This, then, is the meaning of the Gemara that states that a year that is impoverished in the beginning will be wealthy at the end. When one humbles

himself on Rosh HaShanah, he will be with HaShem and one who is with HaShem is guaranteed wealth, as it is said (Mishlei 10:22) *bircas HaShem hi taashir*, it is the blessing of HaShem that enriches. We can now also understand why the Gemara in Rosh HaShanah cited the verse that states ((Devarim 11:12) *eretz asher HaShem Elokecha doreish osah tamid einei HaShem Elokecha bah mereishis hashanah viad acaharis hashanah*, a Land that HaShem, your G-d, seeks out; the eyes of HaShem, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year's end. The Sefarim write that the word *eretz*, translated as land, can also be interpreted as *ratzon*, which means will. Thus, we can suggest that the verse is alluding to the idea that we mentioned that HaShem seeks out the one who is humble, i.e., the one who is performing His will. Thus, on Rosh HaShanah, HaShem seeks out those who humble themselves before Him with prayer and repentance, and those people will be guaranteed a wealthy year. It is noteworthy that the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 11:1) interprets the verse of *bircas HaShem hi taashir* to be referring to Shabbos. On Shabbos we rejoice in HaShem's kingship, and the method of recognizing HaShem as our king is by humbling ourselves before Him. HaShem should allow us to merit this great sense of humility, and then He will shine His glory upon us, and the whole world will know of HaShem's existence. The entire Jewish People should merit a *Ksiva Vachasima Tova* and the arrival of

Moshiach, Tzidkeinu, speedily, in our days.

## Shabbos in the Zemiros

### Askinu Seudasa

Composed by the Arizal, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria

*Tzivachin af aksin biteilin ushvisin biram anpin chaditin viruchin im nafshin*, screaming and anguished, nullified and suspended! But for Israel - a new face, and spirit with soul increased. The explanation of this passage is that the powers of evil despair with the onset of Shabbos as they cannot penetrate the sanctity of Shabbos, where the union between the Jewish People and HaShem occurs. The new face refers to the *neshama yeseira*, the extra soul that HaShem bestows upon us with the onset of Shabbos. The words *viruchin im nafshin* literally mean spirits and souls. Perhaps this alludes to the idea mentioned in the Zohar (3:29) that on Shabbos, in addition to the *neshama yeseira*, there is also a *ruach yeseira*, an extra spirit, and a *nefesh yeseira*, an extra soul.

### Shabbos in Tefillah

*Kara lashemesh vayizrach ohr*, He called out to the sun and it glowed with light. This seemingly simple passage contains a profound idea. HaShem called to the sun to illuminate the world, and the sun performed its role. Instead of seeking excuses, we should take a lesson

from the sun and serve HaShem unequivocally.

## **Shabbos Stories**

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky writes: In 1987, Rabbi Yosef Karmel, currently National Director of Peylim/Lev L'Achim, was Director of Camp Agudah of the Midwest, in South Haven Michigan. One weekend he invited two prominent guests to the camp; Rabbi Eliezer Levin, one of America's oldest and most revered rabbis, a student of the Chofetz Chaim, and the Rav of Detroit for nearly fifty years and his son, Rabbi Avraham Chaim Levin, dean and founder of the Telshe Yeshiva of Chicago, a member of the council of Torah Sages, of Agudath Israel, and one of the outstanding and dynamic leaders of American Orthodoxy. It was a rare and extraordinary occasion for the campers, and the atmosphere was spiritually charged. Guests arrived in South Haven to bask in the glow of two generations of Torah giants. After the Shabbos services, Rabbi Karmel announced that while the campers would attend their regularly scheduled learning classes, Rabbi Avraham Chaim Levin would teach the Daf HaYomi, the daily-apportioned Talmudic folio, studied concurrently by Jews the world over, to the lay guests who had come to vacation that weekend together with the camp and the distinguished visitors. As everyone dispersed from shul Rabbi Karmel felt a soft tap on his arm. "Where," the elderly Rav of Detroit asked, "is the Daf HaYomi shiur taking place?" Rabbi

Karmel understood that Rav Levin, ever the rabbinic gentleman, had somehow figured it to be improper for him not to attend the class along with all the other guests. In his humility, conjectured Rabbi Karmel, this scholar - who most certainly could spend the time studying Torah on his own lofty level, was about to sacrifice an hour sitting at a class geared lay people, all in the name of good manners. Reassuringly the camp director told the elderly Rav Levin, "There is no need for you to attend this shiur. It is intended for the Ba'ale Batim (lay people) and no one expects the Rav to attend." The elderly Rav looked at Rabbi Karmel with incredulity and uttered words, which Rabbi Karmel told me, he will never forget: "What? Do you think I would miss the chance to hear my son teach a blatt of Gemara?" (Rabbi Karmel added afterwards: "At the time of this story Rav Avrohom Chaim, soon to become a member of the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah of America, had already served as a Rosh Yeshiva for more than thirty years. The shiur he was to say was not a singular event but rather an example of what he has done so well for many decades. There certainly was no question as to his ability to deliver a brilliant shiur. Yet, to his father it represented an opportunity to be amongst the listeners; a tangible nachas that was more real than all the fame his son had so deservedly accumulated.")

Rabbi Kamenetzky writes further: A number of years ago, one particular yeshiva student entered 9th grade. In his elementary school, this youngster earned

a reputation for being very bright, but also being one of the wildest and most innovative troublemakers that a school can afford! The high school was afraid to accept him, but his potential for success and his parent's good standing in the community helped them decide to take a chance. The dean of the school wanted to place him in a class with a non-nonsense, make-'em-work type of rabbi, but the high school's principal strongly disagreed. He wanted to put him into a class that had a new teacher, a quiet young man who hardly spoke above a whisper. In addition to his low-key demeanor, the rabbi looked as frail and emaciated as a war-refugee. That rabbi's most outstanding trait, which was inversely proportional to his physical stature, was his love and devotion toward even the most difficult student. The principal assured the dean that despite this young student's reputation, he would thrive with this rebbe. Against his better judgment, the dean consented. What took place was truly remarkable. This young boy not only excelled in his Hebrew studies, but during class he never called out, sat quietly in his chair taking notes, and participated in all the discussions. The dean asked the rabbi how he was able to calm him down, and the rabbi just shrugged. Then the dean decided to ask the boy himself. "What changed your classroom attitude this year?" asked the austere dean. "What formula do we have that made you so successful? I'd love to know so I can share it with all our students." "Sorry," smiled the boy. "It was not you or even

the school. It's rebbe! You see, I thought to myself, how can I even think of making trouble. Rebbe is such a tzaddik; he cares so much for me. I know that he even davens (prays) for my success, and I am almost sure that he even fasts for me! I may be a troublemaker, but I am surely no ingrate!" [Reprinted with permission from [www.Torah.org](http://www.Torah.org)]

## **Shabbos in Navi**

### Shmuel I Chapter 5

In this chapter we learn how after the Plishtim captured the Aron, the Holy Ark, they were afflicted with hemorrhoids. Seeing that the cause of their affliction was the Aron, they transferred the Aron from one city to the next. Thus, they recognized that HaShem was all-powerful, and they did not wish to retain the Aron. One who reads this chapter should be struck by an obvious observation. The Plishtim clearly saw the hand of HaShem. Yet, all they chose to do was remove the cause of their affliction from their midst. They could not take the extra step of recognizing HaShem and abandoning their idols. We, the Chosen People, merit every week to bask in the Divine Presence of HaShem, on His Holy Day of Shabbos. Is it possible that we can return to the weekday without being uplifted and inspired in some way? HaShem should allow us to keep the light of the Holy Shabbos burning in our hearts throughout the week.

## Shabbos in Agadah

The Pinei Menachem, the Gerrer Rebbe, writes (Vaeschanan 5755) that the Gemara (Pesachim 105b) states that one can take in Shabbos early but one should end Shabbos late. The reason for this ruling is so that one does not view Shabbos as a burden. The mitzvos were not given to us for pleasure, and one should be cognizant of the yoke of responsibility that the mitzvah entails. Nonetheless, one should not willingly remove the yoke of a mitzvah from upon him. It is said (perhaps in the name of the Rizhiner) that one should not look to see when Shabbos will depart. This is akin to a king who arrives in a city. One should not be looking for the time when the king will depart.

## Shabbos in Halacha

Any appliance that one normally uses for cooking requires a blech i.e. a covering to allow returning. Thus, ovens require an insert and one must line crockpots and adjustable hotplates with aluminum foil. [It is preferable that the knobs be covered]. A non-adjustable hot-plate that cannot be used for cooking and is only used to keep food warm does not require a blech. A non-adjustable crockpot, however, does require a blech, as this is generally used for cooking.

## Shabbos in Numbers and Words

In the zemer of Askinu Seudasa on Friday night we recite the words *chadu sagi yeisei vial chada tartei nihorah lah yimtei uvirchaan dinfishin*, abundant joy arrives, in place of one, a double measure. Brilliance will envelop the soul, and manifold blessings. The Imrei Emes (Beshalach 5693) writes that this means that through the joy the light is doubled, as in Kisvei Arizal it is brought that the word *sichok*, laughter (414), is in gematria double the word *ohr*, light (207).

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