

בעזהשׁי״ת

Parshah Insights

Pertinent Inspirational
Insights on the Parshah

נצבים - ראש השנה

Translated from the outstanding Lev Shomaya Parsha series that contain highlights of the lectures and deroshos given by:

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The purpose of this publication is to make these wonderful Divrei Torah and chizuk available to the English speaking public. We are very grateful to Harav Low shlita for allowing us to glean selected inspiring thoughts.



פרשת נצבים

ויעשו כולם אגודה אחת לעשות רצונך

Utilizing this Shabbos

The Zohar states that all blessing and bounty within the week are bestowed on the person the Shabbos before (זוהר בראשית דף פ"ח.). Likewise, as is widely known, all success of the following year is decided upon on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Accordingly, being that this week is the final Shabbos of the year, it is very unique and pivotal. Since, besides for containing the brachah of the coming week, it also encompasses all success and bounty for the coming year. Indeed, seforim hakedoshim encourage one to utilize the last Shabbos of the year to do Teshuvah (בית אהרן, באר מים חיים), especially being that the day of Shabbos in itself is an auspicious time for doing Teshuvah. Thus, if we conduct ourselves in a befitting manner, we will b'ezras Hashem merit a year full of good.

The following is a suggestion of one area through which we could merit a year full of good, if we work on it properly.

Keeping Together; Meriting Life

אתם נצבים היום כלכם וגו'

In this week's parsha, Moshe Rabeinu gathers all the Yidden and begins addressing them with the words "אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני ה'"אלוהיכם, you are all standing [here] today before Hashem your G-d.

It is interesting to note that this parsha, Nitzavim, is always read the week before Rosh Hashanah, as is stated in Shulchan Aruch. (אורח חיים) (Also, the זוהר הקדוש says that the word **היום**, today, is always a reference to the day of Rosh Hashanah (זוה"ק במדבר דף רל"א). Based on this, many ספרים הקדושים explain that the Torah is referring here to the Great Judgement of Rosh Hashanah, telling us that on this day all of Klal Yisrael stand before Hashem as He judges each person for the upcoming year.

Chazal explain this verse in the following manner. Moshe Rabeinu compared the position of Klal Yisrael to the nature of 'day'. Just as the day gets light and dark, so too, although you may often experience times of 'darkness', if you will keep together as one, know, that it will soon become 'light' again (תנחומא אות ד') **אתם נצבים היום - כולכם**.

The pasuk then continues by listing the various groups in Klal Yisrael who are standing before Hashem. We see that Chazal also interpret this as a condition to meriting good. In this vein, we could interpret this pasuk with regard to the Judgement of Rosh Hashanah: "אתה נצבים היום כולכם", you are all standing before Hashem, ראשיכם, שבטיכם וזקניכם, the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers. Here, the Torah is giving us a way of meriting a favorable Judgement, namely, by keeping together as one, undivided people, despite being so many different classes.

Perhaps, this is also alluded to in the pasuk "ואתם הדבקים בה" (דברים ד', ד') "ואתם הדבקים", you who cling to Hashem your G-d, are all alive today (דברים ד', ד'). In light of the discussion above, it could be interpreted "ואתם הדבקים" - by clinging to each other, "חיים כולכם", you will merit to be inscribed for life, "היום", on the day of Rosh Hashanah.

It must be noted, though, that when talking of Achdus - unity - we are not only referring to being together physically. Being in the company of others, while a praiseworthy act with many benefits, is not the only desired level of oneness. Even more so, if there are hard feelings between them, simply being together doesn't achieve much.

Ultimately, we are highlighting the immense value of being at peace with each other, and being unified as one people with one heart, as well as accepting each other blindly.

As the Imrei Emes of Ger writes, "It is customary for people to come together on Rosh Hashana. However, the purpose of this is not the gathering of people alone, rather the ultimate objective is to be united at heart" (אמרי אמת ר"ה תרט"ו).

A Prerequisite to Crowning Hashem

In fact, this attitude is essential when it comes to accepting Hashem as our King, which is the central theme of Rosh Hashanah. As Rashi writes on the pasuk "ויהי בישורון מלך בהתאסף ראשי עם יחד שבטי ישראל", and [Hashem] became King over the Yidden when they gathered in unity [at Har Sinai]. "בהתאספם יחד באגודה אחת רש"י explains this as "ושלום ביניהם הוא מלכם ולא כשיש מחלוקת" when they come together in one bond and there is peace among them, only then is Hashem considered their King, and not when there is conflict among them (דברים לג, ה' ורש"י שם).

Indeed, the אמרי אמת supports this notion, by alluding to the famous words of Rav Sa'adya Gaon, who provides many reasons for blowing shofar on Rosh Hashana, one reason being that we blow the shofar on ראש השנה to commemorate הר סיני מעמד, where Hashem sounded the Shofar. Thus, says the Imrei Emes, just as by Matan Torah the Yidden were at peace with each other, 'as one people with one heart', so too, we must seek to emulate this quality by fostering this level of wholesome love and bonding on Rosh Hashana.

Our Tefillos Accepted through Unity

One great benefit of being united with others and davening with them is that one could merit favorable Judgement more easily. As we find that the הקדוש זוהר cautions that when davening, one shouldn't

ask to have his requests answered in his own merit, since this could lead to bringing negative judgement upon oneself, chalilah. Rather, one should seek to be among others, and evoke Heavenly Mercy in the merit of the tzibbur. The Zohar derives this from an episode in ג"ך about Elisha and his hostess the Shunamis, who would host him each time he came to the town of Shunaim, where she lived. On one such occasion, Elisha called for her and, to express his thanks for her hospitality, asked if there was anything he could intercede by the king on her behalf. As the pasuk says: *ויהי היום ויבא שמה... ויאמר... מה לעשות*: "לך היש לדבר לך אל המלך ותאמר בתוך עמי אנכי יושבת" and it happened one day that he arrived there... and [Elisha] said [to his servant Gehazi, ask her] can something be said on your behalf to the king. She replied 'I dwell among my people' (מלכים ב': ד', י"א-י"ג). On the surface, he seemed to inquire if she has any issue for which he could use his influence to alleviate her from. To this she replied that no, she was living peacefully and had no request to the authorities.

The זוהר, however, reveals the deeper meaning of this exchange. This story took place on Rosh Hashanah - as is implied by the term "ויהי היום" - and it was **the** day, which is a reference to Rosh Hashanah. Thus, Elisha was asking if she wanted him to ask the King, Hashem, and arouse Heavenly Mercy on her behalf. She replied in kind: *בתוך עמי אנכי יושבת*, I dwell among my people. Meaning, the Shunamis was telling Elisha that, while she did indeed want to invoke Heavenly Compassion for her, she did not want him to pray for her alone. Rather, she wished to be included in his prayers on behalf of other Yidden.

The reason for this, the Zohar continues, is because she was afraid of Heavenly scrutiny which might bring up the memory of her misdeeds. However, by including herself as part of a group, with the tefillos of her fellow people, she was able to be judged favorably. Thus, she wished to be mentioned in the tefillos where Elisha was davening for others as well (זוהר הקדוש ויצא דף ק"ט).

This idea is actually reflected in halachah, as the שולחן ערוך states that if one does not have a minyan close by and is thus davening alone on Rosh Hashana, he should be careful to daven at the same time as the tzibbur, since, by davening alone he could evoke strict Heavenly Judgement upon himself. However, if he davens in conjunction with the congregation [tzibbur], he stands a far better chance of being judged favorably (שו"ע סימן תקצ"א סעיף ח' ומשנ"ב סעיף קטן י"ד).

No Prosecutor

Furthermore, not only could unity help one merit a favorable judgement, it can also entirely prevent the Satan from talking bad about the person. As the Maor Vashamesh writes in the beginning of this week's parshah: "It is well known that uniting with others is a major aspect of Teshuvah. Since, by doing so, one will come to recognize the unique spiritual qualities of his friend and seek to emulate those admirable character traits. Moreover, when one chooses not to envy his friend, and eradicates any resentment, preferring rather to follow his good example, the Satan has no power to prosecute against him. Consequently, Hashem will mirror this behaviour, so to speak, and conduct Himself toward His people with compassion and favor, ultimately nullifying their sins (מאור ושמש פר' נצבים).

Incidentally, many of our requests during the Yomim Noraim are in the plural. For instance, the tefillos of zochreinu, uchesov, and b'sefer chaim, which we add into the Sh'moneh Esrei, were constructed in this manner; זכרנו לחיים, remember **us** to Life, וכתוב כל בני בריתך לחיים... inscribe **all** of Your children in the Book of Life, נזכר ונכתב בספר חיים... may **we** be inscribed in the Book of Life etc. Similarly, the tefillos recited whilst eating the Simanim on the night of Rosh Hashanah are also in this vain; שירבו זכויותינו, that **our** merits shall be many, שנפרה ונרבה כדגים, that **we** shall multiply like fish of the sea, etcetera. This symbolizes the idea discussed above - that being united with others during this time of year, and including oneself with

others during davening, greatly increases the likelihood of one meriting favorable judgement.

Public Service - a Ticket to a Good Year

It is worthy to note that in the works of Mussar, there is one idea, among others emphasized many times over. Namely, that in order to merit a favorable Judgement, one should seek ways to become "אדם ל"ו" - שרבים צריכים לו" - an individual to whom many people must come on to. In other words, becoming a 'servant of the public', so to speak, or a communal activist, for instance, increases one's chances for meriting a god year. It should be noted that this does not necessarily mean on the large scale - which not everyone is capable of. Rather readying oneself to be of help to anyone in need also merits this description.

Perhaps it is for this very reason that Parshas Nitzavim is read on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. This is to stress the utter importance of living together as one, especially as we approach the Day of Judgement. Also, we learn the great benefit of including ourselves as part of the public, rather than keeping to oneself.

Let us utilize this Shabbos to become ever closer at heart with one another. And, as result, may we merit a favorable Judgement, and a year of plenty spiritually and materialistically.



ראש השנה

יְרֵאתִי מִתּוֹךְ שְׂמִיחָתִי וְשִׂמְחָתִי מִתּוֹךְ יְרֵאתִי (תדב"א רבא ג)

Halel on Rosh Hashana?

There is a dispute among the Geonim whether one is permitted to fast on Rosh Hashanah. On the one hand, it is a very pivotal day, a day of Judgement. As such, it would seem inappropriate for one to celebrate joyously on such a day. On the other hand, however, it is a Yom Tov, when one mustn't fast. Moreover, it is specifically on this day that we are instructed to rejoice. As the pasuk says; "לכו אכלו משמנים ושתו ממתקים... כי קדוש היום לאדונינו ואל; [Ezra Hasofer said to the Yidden] go eat rich foods and drink sweet beverages... for this day [Rosh Hashanah] is sacred to our G-d. Do not be sad, for the enjoyment of Hashem is your strength" (נחמי' ח', י).

In correspondence with the above discussion, The Tur writes: "אוכלין" "אורח חיים סימן תקצ"ז) (אורח חיים סימן תקצ"ז) we eat, drink, and rejoice on Rosh Hashanah, and we do not fast [on this day] (אורח חיים סימן תקצ"ז). At first glance, this statement seems difficult to understand. How could one celebrate and rejoice at a time when his life is hanging in the balance whilst his fate is being decided?

In addition, we find in Chazal that the malochim wondered as to why the Yidden do not recite Halel on Rosh Hashanah. Hashem replied that since He is judging the people of the world on this day, it is inappropriate to praise Him (ראש השנה דף ל"ב:). One might wonder, as we know, Halel is only recited to commemorate the

miracles that took place at a given time in history. For instance, on pesach we celebrate the exodus from Egypt. During Sukkos, we commemorate the miracle of the ענני הכבוד, and so forth. However, we do not find a miracle that took place on Rosh Hashanah. Why, then, do the angels wonder why we don't say Halel; the reason seems obvious since there is no special miracle to commemorate.

Moreover, their question is particularly strange since, as we say in the piyut ונתנה תוקף, the angels are also judged on Rosh Hashanah. Thus, even they tremble in fear of Judgement. If this is the malachim's reaction to their judgement, even more so should Klal Yisrael quaver in fear and trepidation. Hence, it is no wonder that they don't say Halel since they do not have the appropriate state of mind for saying Halel due to their fear.

Similarly, what Hashem answered also implies that there would indeed be a reason to say Halel. Hashem replied that it is unbecoming to praise Him by saying Halel at the time the people are being judged. Now, it appears that there is actually a reason to say Halel, only it is not right to recite it now. This reinforces the notion that there is reason to celebrate on this day.

Hashem's Love of His Children

It is well known that we, Klal Yisrael, are children of Hashem. As the Torah tells us "בנים אתם לה' אלוהיכם", you are children to Hashem your G-d (דברים י"ד, א'). Consequently, just as every parent loves their child, all the more so, Hashem's love for each of his children is tremendous. On Rosh Hashanah, the Satan comes before Hashem demanding that He punish those who have sinned throughout the year. This claim seems justified, for if one transgresses an Aveirah, chalilah, it is only right that he be penalized for it. The Zohar comments that Hashem also loves justness, as the Navi says "אני ה' אוהב משפט", I am Hashem Who loves justice (ישעיה' ס"א, ח'). Nevertheless, says the Zohar, Hashem's love for His children is so immense, that it overrides His

love for justice. Therefore, although we might be deserving of punishment because of our sins, Hashem, in His abundant Kindness, spares us from suffering, because He loves us so. (זוהר אמור דף צ"ט:).

As a result, whilst Hashem examines each action of a person, consequently granting reward for the good deeds one performed and punishment for every misdeed. Still, even when someone is deserving of punishment, Hashem, in His infinite Kindness, will also apply the Divine attribute of Compassion to determine the verdict for this individual. Therefore, although one ought to receive a harsh judgement for his sins, he could be spared the full extent of suffering coming to him and will instead be given a sentence that is less severe, or more chance to rectify his deeds. However, in order to merit such conduct, one must do his part too, by utilizing all of his energy to draw closer to Hashem on this day. Only then could a person hope for leniency in his judgement.

In light of this, we could understand that while Rosh Hashanah is indeed a day of judgement, and as such, one might fear, wondering what has been allotted to him for the year to come. Yet, at the same time, one is able to rejoice since the Judge is his loving Father in Heaven. Thus, one could rest assured, knowing that Hashem will certainly shower him with abundant goodness.

Likewise, the dialogue between Hashem and the angels - as to why we don't say Halel on Rosh Hashanah - could be understood in a similar vein. For, while indeed no miracle actually took place during this time of the year, there is still reason to celebrate the good that Hashem grants us. Namely, despite the prosecutors in the Heavenly Court demanding that the wrongdoers be punished for their misdeeds, Hashem disregards their words out of great Love for His children. Hence, while during the rest of the year, Halel is recited to thank Hashem for His miracles, on Rosh Hashanah we are grateful for something else entirely. We acknowledge Hashem's love for us in granting us a favorable judgement, thus overriding His love for justice.

Understanding the accuracy of the malachim's question, we can delve into Hashem's response, that although it is indeed proper that we praise His benevolence, it is unbecoming to actually say Hallel on Rosh Hashana since it is a day of Judgement. Thus, while we do recognize and appreciate Hashem's Graciousness for granting us a favorable judgement, we refrain from expressing it during this time since the judgment is still on and there is still reason for trepidation.

Acknowledging Hashem's Strict Judgement

We say in the zemiros of Shabbos "משוך חסדך ליודעך קל קנא ונוקם", extend Your kindness to those who know You, [Hashem Who is a] G-d of zeal and vengeance [to those who anger Him] (זמר כל מקדש) (ליל שבת). The holy tzaddik Rav Levi Yitzchak of Barditchev zy"א notes that this verse is somewhat incoherent. The term קל קנא ונוקם signifies Hashem's attributes of strict Judgement. Why, if we're trying to invoke Divine compassion here, do we address Hashem in this way? It would be much more fitting to use a term like קל רחום וחנון, G-d Who is Compassionate and Gracious, which represents Hashem's Kindness?

To explain this, he shares a very penetrating insight. He says that one cannot anticipate Heavenly mercy if he assumes that Hashem, in His benevolent kindness, will tolerate any form of behavior, no matter how low man may stoop. However, when one acknowledges that Hashem runs the world with a conduct of strict Judgement, but is Gracious toward those who admit their flaws and fear His Judgement, then he will indeed show Compassion and shower him with goodness.

Alas, the aforementioned verse reads as follows; "משוך חסדך", extend Your kindness. To whom? "ליודעך קל קנא ונוקם", to those who recognize You as being a G-d of zeal and vengeance. For, it is indeed only such individuals who are worthy of experiencing Hashem's kindness (קדושת לוי ליקוטים ד"ה משוך חסדך). With this awareness, one can hope that Hashem will be lenient in his Judgement.

Fear and Simcha - a Crucial Balance

There is in fact another, deeper component to our simchah on Rosh Hashanah. The following observation was told by one of the magiddim of yesteryear. Imagine, he says, someone is sailing in a boat on the high seas when suddenly a storm broke out, and his ship capsized, throwing him overboard. While in the water, he is struggling to swim ashore, fighting desperately for every breath, trying his best to keep his head above the raging sea, narrowly avoiding its intense waves. Suddenly, from the safety of dry land, someone throws out a rope in his direction. With his ebbing strength, he manages to lurch forward, grabbing hold of the rope's end. While he is overjoyed at the prospect of being saved, he also takes great care not to let go of the rope, afraid that if he's negligent he might fall right back into the sea.

The same idea, said the Beis Halevi of Brisk, could be applied with regard to our happiness on Rosh Hashanah. While we do celebrate festively on Rosh Hashanah, secure in the knowledge that Hashem, our loving Father, will inscribe us in the Book of Life, we must not forget that today is also the day of Judgement, when the future of all mankind is determined. Thus, we must ensure that our joy is measured, balancing it fairly with trepidation. As the pasuk says: "עבדו" "תהלים ב', י"א) serve Hashem with awe so and rejoice when there is trembling (א"א).

May we endeavour to recognize Hashem's attributes of Judgment and Mercy , and in turn, merit a happy new year full of good.

בברכת כתיבה וחתימה טובה

גוט שבת

&

גוט יום טוב



