

Candle Lighting

7:02

S"Z Kriat Shema

10:11

Sunset

7:19

Motzei
Shabbat

7:54

Parshat HaShavuah

נצבים-וילך

NITZAVIM-
VAYEILECH

כ"ה אלול תשע"ד

SEPTEMBER 20,
2014

A PUBLICATION OF

The Weinbaum
Yeshiva
High School
INSPIRE & CHALLENGE

Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

RABBI BENJY HOROWITZ 1,4

LANA ROSENTHAL ('17) 2

YAACOV SIEV ('15) 2-3

YONAH FREIDEN ('18) 3-4

ERIC FACTOR ('18) 4

TESHUVA 101

RABBI BENJY HOROWITZ

In just a few days we will be standing before Hashem and asking to be forgiven for our sins. We have been preparing ourselves for Rosh Hashana since the beginning of Elul with shofar blowing and added tefillot, including selichot.

While we have been talking about our obligation to do teshuva, it is worth noting that there seems to be a debate whether or not doing teshuva is even a mitzvah.

The Ramban clearly states that there is a commandment to do teshuva. The source for this is a pasuk in Parshat Netzavim, "*veshavta ad Hashem Elokecha*,"—"and you will return to Hashem your God" (30:2). A few pesukim later, the Torah writes ambiguously: "For this commandment that I command you is not hidden from you" (30:11). According to the Ramban, this is referring to the mitzvah of teshuva, and Hashem is telling us that no matter where we are we are able to do teshuva.

The Rambam seems to have a different understanding. He writes that there is not an independent mitzvah to do teshuva, but that when one does teshuva, there is a mitzvah to do *viduy* -confession. The Rambam writes in Hilchot Teshuva that the pasuk, "*veshavta ad Hashem Elokecha*" is not a command but a promise that the Jews will one day do teshuva.

Rav Soloveitchik has a different explanation that sheds light on the purpose of the whole teshuva process. The Rav writes that there are some commandments where the action is the fulfillment of the mitzvah. An example of this is the mitzvah of lulav. The obligation is to "take" the lulav, and once a person takes the lulav he has fulfilled the commandment.

Continued page 4





STAND UNSTILL

LANA ROSENTHAL ('17)
MONTHLY WRITER

The titles of this week's two parshiyot are very significant. Nitzavim means standing, from "*atem nitzavim hayom*"—"you stand on this day" (Devarim 29:9). Vayeilech means, "and he went." Although these two themes are contrasting, they also go hand-in-hand.

As discussed in an article by Rabbi Mendel Matusof, Hashem is represented by the title Nitzavim: He is ever-present, invariable, and all-powerful. "*Hu haya, hoveh, veyihyeh*"—"He has always been and will always be." He is the Tzur Yisrael—our dependable, unmoving, fixed "rock." Bnei Yisrael, however, are dynamic. We are progressive, ever-growing, and ever-changing; we represent the title Vayeilech.

Like Hashem, the Torah is fixed—it is "Nitzavim." Its lessons and mitzvot are meant for generations. The laws do not change, and we cannot add to or subtract from them. However, Hashem has given the rabbis the authority to make new rulings, to create new halachot when problems arise today, to create boundaries around the Torah, and to interpret its words. In fact, in this week's Torah portion, Parshat Nitzavim, we find the famous words "*lo bashamayim hi*"—"the Torah is not in heaven" (Devarim 30:12). From here we learn that humans are given the power to interpret the Torah to help determine the halachot and how they apply to our practices. In this way, albeit limited, the Torah continues to evolve—it is "Vayeilech."

This theme is especially relevant as we near Rosh Hashana. In the Rosh Hashana davening, we discuss two kinds of relationships that we have with Hashem: the father/child relationship and the king/servant relationship. The first connection denotes our unwavering love for Him, and His for us, because the love between a father and child is concrete; this bond is "Nitzavim." The relationship between king and servant, on the other hand, is much harder. We must constantly work to serve Hashem and to be the best Jew we can be. Therefore, this bond is "Vayeilech."

The duality expressed in this week's parshiyot models our relationship with Hashem, both when we were a new nation about to enter the land of Israel, and still a millennia later, as we enter into another new year.

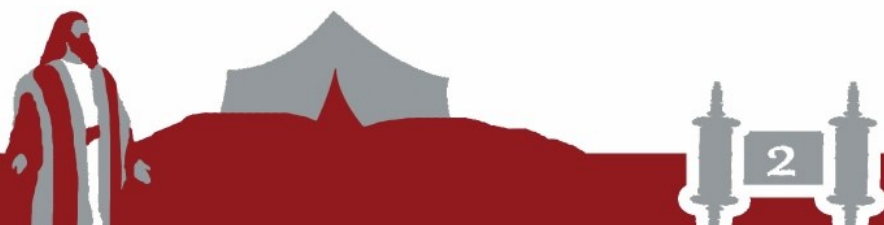
GROUP EFFORT

YAACOV SIEV ('15)

In this week's parshiyot, Nitzavim-Vayeilech, Bnei Yisrael are presented with the mitzvah of *hakei*, which is performed when all of Bnei Yisrael gather together in Yerushalayim. This only occurs on Succot in the year following a *shmita* year. The king then reads from the Torah to inspire the nation. Men, women, and children are present at this event; the Torah even commands children who are too young to understand to be there. Why? Rashi explains that even though the child will gain nothing from the experience, the Torah still wants him there and even rewards parents for bringing their children. However, what reward do the parents really deserve? If the child will not get anything out of the experience, then why do the parents get rewarded for bringing him?

A 500-pound bomb can level a building. A 1,000-pound bomb can level an apartment complex. According to that logic, an atomic bomb, which can level a city, probably weighs thousands upon thousands of pounds, correct? Of course not. This is because an atomic bomb is not simply a stronger bomb. It is a *different* bomb. It is built differently, so it works differently. The same is true of a group of people. A group of people is not the sum of its parts or a stronger person. It is a group. Ten men praying together is not equivalent to ten times one person praying alone. It is a minyan—a new entity, a stronger entity.

Continued page 3





Siev continued

Part of what makes *hakeI* so special is the fact that it is a group effort. It is not simply a gathering of individuals hearing the Torah. It is a group, the nation, hearing the Torah, and it therefore has a greater effect on the participants. This means that every single person counts. Everyone helps comprise that group, even the small children who don't gain from the experience at all. Hence, the parents get rewarded for bringing their small children; they get rewarded for helping build up the group.

Soon, the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur will be upon us. During the prayers on those days we repeatedly sing the word "*ashamnu*"—"we have sinned, etc." Why are we singing about our past sins? How brazen! Why are we bragging, gloating about our sins of the previous year? The answer is that while we stand in shul praying together, we are a group, a nation, and Hashem promises that He will never destroy the Jewish nation. As individuals, we have no such guarantee. So, when we stand together in shul as a congregation, we sing our sins and say to Hashem, "Yes, we have sinned, but You have no choice but to forgive us because we are a nation."

B'ezrat Hashem we should only have unity in our nation and be sealed for a sweet new year! Shabbat shalom!

HAVE COURAGE

YONAH FREIDEN ('18)

What would you do if your doctor told you that you only had one more day to live? Would you believe it? After all, doctors can be wrong. What if it was Hashem telling you?

Hashem tells Moshe that it's time for him to die. According to one midrash, Moshe is scared to meet his death and begs Hashem to let him live longer. First, he suggests to Hashem that Yehoshua can take over the nation and he himself will just observe from the sidelines; then he asks Hashem to let him remain alive as a bird or a fish. Hashem repeatedly says no. Finally, Hashem shows Moshe the land of Israel and how it will be beneficial for Bnei Yisrael. Only then, when Moshe sees that his people will be taken care of, can he die in peace. He ultimately realizes that everyone and everything has to die in its time.

Moshe knows he is going to die and therefore must choose a successor. Why does he pick Yehoshua? Hashem reminds Moshe of Yehoshua's good qualities: his inquisitive nature, his passion for learning, his hard work, and his admiration for Moshe. According to Rashi, Yehoshua is careful, slow to act, a good judge, and respectful of others.

But we have to wonder how Yehoshua feels about undertaking such a huge job. Wasn't he terrified to lead the entire Jewish nation? I certainly would be. Sometimes, being scared can be a good thing. If people weren't scared of pain, they might end up hurting themselves and each other. If people weren't scared of death, they might end up accidentally killing themselves and each other.

When you think about it, everything takes courage. Even walking out of your own house takes a small amount of courage, though you may not always realize it. The famous poet Emily Dickinson was scared to walk out her own front door. In the last years of her life, she had trouble even leaving her room. I believe it's the uncertainty about a given situation rather than the situation itself that scares us. Maybe we are only afraid of the unknown because it feels weird and different.

Continued page 4



CHOOSE LIFE! ERIC FACTOR ('18)

As he nears the end of his life, Moshe's gives a great and powerful speech to Bnei Yisrael. Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, so that you may live, you and your children" (Devarim 30:19). First, Bnei Yisrael are faced with the ultimate choice—they can choose life or they can choose death. Then, in dramatic fashion, Moshe urges the people to choose life. Choose life! To life! L'chaim! This is the core of Judaism. We toast to life. We sing to life. Life is a gift, and, as Jews, we choose to use it well.

The life we are given is a life of choices. Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Akiva have an argument about just what it means to choose life. Rabbi Yishmael says that "life" refers to a trade or a craft—the ability to earn a livelihood. With this command, we are being instructed to choose a means to make a living. On the other hand, Rabbi Akiva says that "life" refers to matters of safety and recreation. To him, choosing life means taking care of one's physical condition and making certain that one is prepared for a physical world that can be dangerous.

Indeed, it is sublime to be involved in this world. That is the greatest life that can be chosen. We must be active participants in the economic and social structure of our society while being ever mindful and aware of G-d and our Judaism.

To choose life is to live an actual life. A normal, productive, real-world life. As Jews, our task is to elevate and infuse our lives with spirituality as we engage and interact with the world around us.

Horowitz continued

The mitzvah of teshuva fits into a different category, one where the action that we do—confessing—is not the fulfillment of the mitzvah. The true objective of teshuva is to return to Hashem. As the Rambam puts it, "the sinner should turn from his sin **in front of Hashem** and confess." The action the sinner does is to confess, to admit his sin, but the true fulfillment of the mitzvah is to turn away from his sin and towards God.

May we all be able to experience true teshuva this year and may all of our tefillot be answered *l'tovah!*

Freiden continued

At the end of Parshat Nitzavim, Moshe says to Bnei Yisrael, "I have put before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life!" This ties perfectly into Rosh Hashana, a time when we reflect on our actions of the past year and think about how we want to behave in the new year. It is important to remember that we have a choice about what kind of a person we want to be. Will we let fear hold us back, or will we employ the bravery of Yehoshua to help us accomplish our goals? L'shana Tovah.

Editor-in-Chief

Bailey Frohlich ('16)

Editors

Daniella Cohen ('15)
Laura Flescher ('16)
Jessica Griff ('15)
Shanee Markovitz ('16)
Elie Zaghi ('16)

Faculty Advisor

Rabbi Avi Hochman

Staff

Monthly Writers

Ariel Bugay ('15)
Jolie Davies ('16)
Tamara Kahn ('17)
Lana Rosenthal ('17)
Leor Levenson ('16)

Category Writers

Baila Eisen ('15)
Chaya Cohen ('16)
Matthew Cleeman ('16)
Matthew Samilow ('17)

Developers

Ayala Broide ('17)
Evan Jacoby ('17)
Saul Len ('16)
Casey Winderbaum ('16)

Layout

Jacob Wells ('15)

Distribution

Adam Shalloway ('17)

Interested in sponsoring Ashreinu?
Contact Rabbi Hochman at
RAVH@WYHS.NET

This publication contains Torah matter-
Please treat it with respect



7902 Montoya Circle
Boca Raton, FL 33433
Phone: 561-417-7422
Fax: 561-417-7028
www.wyhs.net