



LOUGHTON SHUL
MORE THAN A

INSPIRE

NITZAVIM VAYELECH - 23 ELUL - 12 SEPTEMBER

HEALTHY DYNAMIC

Our lives as individuals often display two quite different features. One is dynamism, movement, progress, discovery and change. The second feature, seemingly the opposite, yet also very important, is the attempt to strengthen one's position, to consolidate, to attempt to be secure and firm, immovable. The combination of these two contrasting qualities creates a healthy dynamic. One moves forward and grows - but not at the expense of what one has already gained. There is the thrust towards expansion and also a concern for consolidation.

These two qualities are expressed by the names of the double Torah portion which is read this Shabbat, the Shabbat before the New Year, Rosh Hashanah. The first Torah portion is called Nitzavim, which means in Hebrew "standing firm." In its opening words, Moses tells the Jewish people "you are all standing firm here today." The second Torah portion is called Vayelech, which means "he went," referring to Moses: "Moses went and said these words to the Jewish people."

While there are many fascinating ideas and teachings within these two Torah portions, something important is transmitted just by their very names: standing firm and moving forward. This provides guidance as to how we should live our lives, and has particular relevance on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah.

While the double theme of consolidation and advance can be applied to the business world and many other aspects of human endeavor, it also has special relevance for the spiritual life of a Jewish man or woman. Let us consider this in terms of the three general realms of Jewish expression: Torah study, Prayer and good deeds:

Torah study combines both a fixed, firm dimension, and also an inner dynamic. There is the fixed text of the Torah Scroll and the other books of the Bible, the Written Torah. Yet this is discussed and explored by seemingly endless books of teachings and commentaries by great Sages, who in every epoch provide guidance relevant to the challenges of that particular time. So, on the one hand Torah is constant, on the other it is growing.

Prayer, too, has a "fixed" quality and also a personal dynamic. The fixed prayer is the text in the prayerbook. Many parts of it are exactly the same every day of the year, whether an ordinary weekday or Yom Kippur. Then come special prayers, unique to certain days. Even more so, there is the individual and personal way in which a man or woman may approach the printed text, with their own unique feeling.

Finally in the realm of the precepts of Judaism (the **Mitzvot**), there is the fixed structure of the ideal Jewish lifestyle. And there is also the personal way in which any individual approaches this, taking certain points on board in their daily lives, emphasizing some details more than others, gradually increasing in observance and at the same time consolidating what one has already achieved.

Why Does G-d Not Feed the Poor?

By Aron Moss

Question:

G-d is surely not a hypocrite. If He tells us to do something, He should do it Himself as well. So shouldn't G-d be obligated to feed the poor? Why doesn't He help His own children rather than commanding us to do it for Him?

Answer:

Imagine you know a family that can't put food on the table. You want to help them. So you send a nice check in the post. But it never gets there, as the postman keeps the check for himself.

So you order a meal online for them. But the restaurant gets the order wrong and gives the food to someone else.

Determinedly, you arrange a grocery delivery for them. But the delivery truck never shows up.

Exasperated, you go on to your bank app to do a direct transfer. And the app crashes.

Did you try to help? Yes. Were they helped? No. What went wrong? You were let down by the system. You may have the best intentions, but you rely on others to do their part. If they don't, the help doesn't arrive.

G-d wants to help everyone. So He created a world that has all the necessary resources to feed every mouth. And he set up a system to deliver the goods to those who are in need.

There is enough money in the world for everyone to have what they need, enough love to give to every lonely person, enough time to help those who can't help themselves. All that is required is goodwill and a sense of responsibility on the part of those who have, to share with those who have not.

We are the system. You and me. Doing our part to keep the system rolling is called tzedakah. Although generally translated as "charity," this term actually means "justice," since it is only right that we pass on the portion of G-d's bounty that is designated for others.

So why are there hungry people? Because we aren't doing our job. If we don't deliver, the food doesn't get to its destination. That is not G-d's fault, it's ours.

Of course, G-d could just cut out the middleman and feed the hungry Himself. But that would defeat the purpose of creation—to make a world of kindness, where people choose to use their gifts to help each other.

Food is not all we need for nourishment. We also have a need for meaning. In order to give us a life of meaning, G-d gives us the opportunity to give. When I help someone more needy than myself, I am also being nourished. I am giving food, but I am receiving much more. I am receiving the gift of purpose.

SHUL TIMES

Shabbat Times

Candle Lighting

7:08pm

Shabbat Ends 8:12pm

Friday

7pm with Rabbi Yanky

Kabbalat Shabbat

outside Shul & on

zoom

Artscroll

1086

1204

Living Torah

1010

1246

PARSHA SUMMARY

The Parshah of Nitzavim includes some of the most fundamental principles of the Jewish faith: The unity of Israel: "You stand today, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d: your heads, your tribes, your elders, your officers, and every Israelite man; your young ones, your wives, the stranger in your gate; from your wood-hewer to your water-drawer." The future redemption: Moses warns of the exile and desolation of the Land that will result if Israel abandons G-d's laws, but then he prophesies that in the end, "You will return to the L-rd your G-d . . . If your outcasts shall be at the ends of the heavens, from there will the L-rd your G-d gather you . . . and bring you into the Land which your fathers have possessed." The practicality of Torah: "For the mitzvah which I command you this day, it is not beyond you, nor is it remote from you. It is not in heaven . . . It is not across the sea . . . Rather, it is very close to you, in your mouth, in your heart, that you may do it." Freedom of choice: "I have set before you life and goodness, and death and evil: in that I command you this day to love G-d, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments . . . Life and death I have set before you, blessing and curse. And you shall choose life." The Parshah of Vayelech ("and he went") recounts the events of Moses' last day of earthly life. "I am one hundred and twenty years old today," he says to the people, "and I can no longer go forth and come in." He transfers the leadership to Joshua, and writes (or concludes writing) the Torah in a scroll which he entrusts to the Levites for safekeeping in the Ark of the Covenant. The mitzvah of Hakhel ("gather") is given: every seven years, during the festival of Sukkot of the first year of the shemittah cycle, the entire people of Israel—men, women and children—should gather at the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, where the king should read to them from the Torah. Vayelech concludes with the prediction that the people of Israel will turn away from their covenant with G-d, causing Him to hide His face from them, but also with the promise that the words of the Torah "shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their descendants."

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

This week's haftorah is the seventh and final installment of a series of seven "Haftarot of Consolation." These seven haftarot commence on the Shabbat following Tisha b'Av and continue until Rosh Hashanah. The prophet begins on a high note, describing the great joy that we will experience with the Final Redemption, comparing it to the joy of a newly married couple. Isaiah then declares his refusal to passively await the Redemption: "For Zion's sake I will not remain silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be still, until her righteousness emerges like shining light..." He implores the stones of Jerusalem not to be silent, day or night, until G-d restores Jerusalem and establishes it in glory. The haftorah then recounts G-d's oath to eventually redeem Zion, when the Jews will praise G-d in Jerusalem. The haftorah also contains a description of the punishment G-d will mete out to Edom and the enemies of Israel. Isaiah concludes with the famous statement: "In all [Israel's] afflictions, He, too, is afflicted, and the angel of His presence redeemed them..." Like a loving father who shares the pain of his child, G-d, too, shares the pain of His people, and awaits the redemption along with them.

WISHING ALL THOSE WITH YARTZEIT THIS WEEK CHAIM ARUCHIM

Leigh Ruth Father Yisrael Zev ben Mordecai 24 Elul
Cohen Raymond Father Mordechai ben Tzvi Ha'Cohen 25 Elul
Conway Nigel Father Moishe ben Herschel 25 Elul
Gee Steven Mother Gittel bas Levi 25 Elul
Grant Gary Father Chaim ben Gadol 25 Elul
Kashket Bernard Father Avraham ben Gershon 25 Elul
Reuben Neville Father Mattityahu ben Netanel 25 Elul
Bermange Ashley Father Shalom ben Moishe Ha'Levi 28 Elul
Bermange Josephine Husband Shalom ben Moishe Ha'Levi 28 Elul
Gee Audrey Mother Chava bas Avraham Eliezer 29 Elul

JEWISH HUMOUR

Old Morris Weisenstein had serious hearing problems for a number of years. He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed old Morris to hear 100%. Morris went back in a month to the doctor and the doctor said, "Mr. Weisenstein, your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again." To which Morris said, "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my will three times!"

RIDDLE OF THE WEEK

How many programmers does it take to change a light bulb?

Answer to last week's Riddle .
By Harey Berg

Bill is the suspect if you read upside down the numbers it says: "Bill is boss. He sells oil."

STORY TIME

The month of Elul was drawing to a close. Everyone was getting ready for Yom Tov, and the "scent" of the High Holidays was already in the air. The marketplace was overflowing with all kinds of merchandise and produce, including the special fruits that are traditionally eaten on Rosh Hashana like pomegranates. The Jewish section of town was bustling with activity as homes were swept from top to bottom and new clothes were fitted and sewn. At the same time it was serious business, as residents prepared themselves spiritually for the coming year. More attention was paid to praying with a minyan, refraining from gossip and in general, improving behavior. Inside the Baal Shem Tov's study hall the final preparations before Rosh Hashana were also underway. Prayers were recited with increased devotion, and all thoughts were focused on returning to G-d in repentance. One evening, a few days before Rosh Hashana, the Baal Shem Tov's disciples were getting ready to pray the evening service. All that was missing was the Baal Shem Tov himself, who had yet to arrive. At precisely the appointed hour the Baal Shem Tov entered the study hall, but instead of opening his prayer book he remained standing, lost in thought. Of course, no one dared mention that it was time to pray. The minutes ticked by and still the Baal Shem Tov seemed distracted, as if he were in another world. His holy face was suffused with intense emotion. However, the Baal Shem Tov's students were already used to such things. When the Baal Shem Tov suddenly roused himself almost an hour later and opened his prayer book, his countenance was virtually shining with joy. That evening, the Baal Shem Tov prayed with unusual intensity and longing. It was obvious that something of very great magnitude had occurred. After the service the Baal Shem Tov explained: "Not very far from here," he began, "lives a Jew who grew up in a traditional Jewish home. But as he grew older, he began to associate with the local peasants. Slowly he abandoned the Jewish path till he was virtually indistinguishable from the gentiles and completely estranged from his roots." Many years passed. The man left the province where he was born and went to live in a totally non-Jewish environment. As time passed, he forgot everything about the Jewish way of life, its prayers and its customs. Before he knew it 30 years had elapsed. "Tonight," the Baal Shem Tov revealed, "this Jew happened to be visiting a Jewish town on business. As soon as he entered the village he could sense the commotion, and this aroused his curiosity. When he asked a passer-by what was going on the man answered, 'Everyone is getting ready for a holiday we call Rosh Hashana. According to Jewish tradition, it is the day on which man was created and the whole world is judged.'" For some reason this explanation struck a chord in the heart of the assimilated Jew. Maybe it was the exclusionary 'we' that emphasised the huge chasm that separated him from his brethren, or perhaps the mere mention of the Day of Judgment. In any event, the man's soul was inexplicably awakened, and he was flooded with memories of his childhood. "As he wandered through the marketplace he was suddenly stricken by the horrifying realisation that he had exchanged a life rich in meaning for an empty existence. At that moment he looked up, and was surprised to find himself standing outside the main synagogue. By then it was almost dark, and people were arriving to pray the evening service." The man was seized by an overwhelming desire to join them, but he was also embarrassed by his non-Jewish appearance. In the end the urge to pray won out, and he went into the women's section and hid behind the curtain. "As the cantor chanted the words 'And He atones for sin...' a shudder passed through the man's body. How he wished to pray, but the words were long forgotten. Tears streamed down his cheeks. When the last congregant had gone home he couldn't bear it any longer and burst out crying. 'Master of the universe!' he wept. 'I know there is no greater sinner than I, but I also know that You are merciful and full of loving-kindness. Heavenly Father, forgive me my transgressions and I will sin no more. I wish to return to You and live as a Jew. Please accept my prayer and do not turn me away!'" The man's heartfelt repentance caused a great commotion in the celestial realms," the Baal Shem Tov explained, "and his prayer ascended to the very Throne of Glory. In fact, it was so powerful that it brought along with it many other prayers that had been waiting hundreds of years to ascend." "When I sensed what was going on in the man's heart," the Baal Shem Tov concluded, "I decided to wait for him to pray so I could join him. Tonight's service was delayed so we could merit to pray with a true penitent..."

FOOD 4 THE SOUL

Not all suffering can be explained. There is pain, sometimes, that is not punishment and not repair. True, we were given Torah, a G-dly wisdom containing the secrets of all things. But concerning these things even Moses asked and was told to be quiet, to cease to ask. Because there are some things that even G-dly wisdom does not explain. Because they cannot be explained. We can only know that whatever happens is from G-d, that G-d is just, and that He does not desire suffering. But until the end of days, we will have to suffer the 'why.'