

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 122

Nitzavim-Vayelech | Closing And Opening The Year Properly



MESILLOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly parasha
by **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l**

From the weekly lectures of his son,
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita

Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelech

Peaceful Conflict

Once, a couple decided to open a guesthouse on a busy road, providing accommodation and hospitality to travelers. They offered food, drinks, lodging, and relaxation services, attracting numerous guests and generating substantial income. However, peace didn't reign between the couple. Throughout the day, they engaged in heated arguments, exchanging insults and harsh words.

The guests, observing the discord, decided that "Better a dry piece of bread in peace than a house full of feasting with strife" (Mishlei 17:1). They chose to sleep under the open sky and eat simple meals, avoiding witnessing the conflicts and disputes. Consequently, the guests checked out, and the income drastically declined.

Realizing the cause of their losses, the innkeeper spoke to his wife, saying, "We're trapped,

caught between the walls of our own conflicts. If we continue to argue, we will end up with nothing, not even a crust of bread. But avoiding arguments is impossible. It's because of your behavior that we're losing our livelihood."

"You're to blame!" she replied.

Although taken aback, the innkeeper agreed, "You're right. But the question remains, what should we do?" He thought to himself and then said, "I have a solution: Let's continue our arguments, but in hidden words, in a veiled language. When you want to curse me, bless me instead. When you want to shout, smile, and I will understand. I will do the same, and we will continue our disputes in secret language, so that the guests won't understand our words!"

She agreed to the proposal, and from that day on, a rumor spread that the couple had resolved their

differences, and peace and tranquility reigned in their home. The guests came and went, enjoying the warm reception, excellent service, delicious meals, and the utmost respect and appreciation shown by the hosts. The remarkable change in their relationship, compared to their previous conflicts and disputes, was evident.

The innkeeper said to his wife, “My dear wife, there are no words to express the taste of the dish you prepared today. It was the most delicious meal I have ever had, and your cooking is the best in the world!”

The wife, with a wide smile, replied, “All the praise belongs to you, my dear husband. The meat you bought was the finest and couldn’t have been any better!”

“**Oh**, it’s because I don’t skimp on money, my dear wife,” the husband responded.

“**Of** course,” she answered, her eyes shining brightly, “You never skimp on money, especially when

it comes to household expenses. Thank you for providing me with such generous spending money!”

The husband agreed, “Especially considering how thoughtfully you manage our expenses, never wasting a penny unnecessarily. You are truly a virtuous wife.”

“**And** you are such a considerate husband, always fulfilling my requests with delight!” the wife replied with a confident tone.

“**Absolutely**,” the husband replied, overwhelmed with joy.

Bang! A rolling pin hurled by the wife struck him.

Boom! A plate thrown by the husband hit her.

The guests were left bewildered. How could such a turn of events occur after all the praise and apparent harmony?

They realized that the couple, despite their outward praise and compliments, were still in the midst of intense tension and conflict. They had simply resorted to altering

their expressions, concealing their animosity, as the seed of hatred

continued to grow within them, just as before.¹

Don't Be Lazy

Yossi was the youngest son of the family. As his wedding day approached, his parents were filled with great excitement, "Our youngest child is getting married!"

In honor of the occasion, the parents decided not to buy their wedding clothes from a store but to go to a tailor who would sew them special garments. The tailor was highly skilled, and crafted a beautifully fitted suit for the father.

The wedding day arrived, and the entire family was on edge. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. Several officers stood at the entrance, demanding to see the father. "We are currently engaged in a highly classified military operation," they said. "Several of our vehicles broke down, and we were instructed to seek your assistance since you have a military garage license."

The father pleaded, "But today is my son's wedding day."

However, the officers were adamant, "The success of this operation depends on it, and many civilians' lives are at stake."

Reluctantly, the father accompanied them. As he saw the vehicles, his heart sank. The repairs could take until the next morning. Immediately, he contacted all his employees and summoned them...

Everyone worked tirelessly, including the father, who owned the garage. His clothes became stained with oil and grease, and large drops of thick sweat soaked his body...

As the sun began to set, the work was finally completed. Breathless, the father returned home and quickly prepared himself.

Due to the pressure he felt, he decided to forgo taking a shower and changing out of his soiled work clothes. Hastily, he put on the new suit over his work garments...

Naturally, the new shirt and suit didn't fit properly because of the dirty clothes underneath, and a strong smell emanated from him due to the dirt and grime on his body and work clothes. Frustrated, he exclaimed, "What a defective shirt! I can hardly button it. Even the tailor who sewed the suit didn't do a proper job. Why doesn't the suit fit nicely on me? Why does it smell bad?"

His dear wife heard him shouting from the room and went to see what had happened. At a glance, she understood everything.

"You're so lazy," his wife said to him, "First, take off your filthy work clothes, then wash your body with soap, and only then put on your new clothes." When

her husband heard this, he followed her advice, and suddenly, his new clothes fit perfectly on his body, and a delightful fragrance emanated from them.

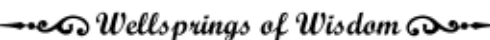
On Rosh Hashanah, we are granted a new light and renewed vitality. However, in order to receive them, we must remove our soiled, tainted, old garments—the negative character traits and unfitting desires. Therefore, first, a person must strip off their dirty clothes, cleanse their heart, and purify it from all impurities. Only then can Hashem dress them in beautiful spiritual garments...

This *avodah* pertains to every Jewish man and woman, and about that in our parasha...

In The Beginning

Hashem created His world in six days. *Chazal* reveal² to us that the first day of creation was on the 25th of Elul. On the sixth day of creation, on the 11st of Tishrei, Adam and Chava were created.

As is known, the 1st of Tishrei is the first day of Rosh Hashanah. In the Musaf prayer, we say, "This is the day of the beginning of Your works, a remembrance of the first day" —



1. Avoteinu Sipru Lanu (Selichot, p. 366).

2. Vayikra Rabbah 29:1.

meaning that this day of Rosh Hashanah is a remembrance of the first day of creation.

At first glance, this seems difficult since the 1st of Tishrei was the sixth day of creation. Thus, why do we say it is a remembrance of the first day?

The Maharsha explained this as follows:³ The reason why Rosh Hashanah is called “the beginning of Your works” is because it is the

day when Adam was created. Adam is the ultimate purpose of the entire creation, and as long as Adam had not been created, the creation had no significance, as if nothing had been created at all! Therefore, Rosh Hashanah is called “the beginning of Your works” because it is the day when Adam, the primary creation, was formed.

Let’s continue with Adam HaRishon...

United Forces

Hashem desired to create a world so that the creations would recognize Him and enjoy closeness to Him, and in order for them to achieve closeness to Him, they would have to put in work.

In order for there to be *avodah* (work), Hashem created a reality of evil and impurity that would present a different reality to Adam, one that is different from the truth. Adam would have to confront this reality and choose good!

Adam HaRishon was a unique creation composed of both physical and spiritual elements, combining body and soul.

The soul of Adam HaRishon was something immense and profound, beyond our ability to understand.

His body, too, was pure and pristine to the utmost degree, pure from any forbidden desire and clean from any negative trait. *Chazal* (Bava Batra 58a) revealed to us that his physical body was

so holy that his two heels emitted
a radiant light like the sun !

Adam HaRishon had no
yetzer hara whatsoever !

Instead, outside his body, all
the elements of evil existed,
plotting their course of conquest...

We don't know what that
evil looked like, but it's probable
that the same evil that exists
today was also present back then,
with one difference !

Today, the reality of evil has

to contend against billions of
people, and because of that, it
dispersed its forces across all
battlefields...

But there, in Gan Eden, there
were only two people, Adam
and Chava, and all the evil
concentrated all its forces against
them.

The evil took all its impurity,
cruelty, and desires and condensed
them into one concentrate, which
it tried to feed to Adam and his
wife...

Don't Do it !

Hashem took Adam HaRishon
and brought him into Gan Eden,
giving him a tour of the entire
garden. Afterward, He said to him:
You see all the lush vegetation
around you ? You may eat as much
as you desire, whenever you desire,
“But of the Tree of Knowledge of
good and evil, you shall not eat of it,
for on the day that you eat of it, you
shall surely die” (Bereshit 2:17)

There are times when a Jew is
faced with a very challenging test,
and then they stand at a crossroads,
the path of holiness – the path of

life, and the path of impurity – the
path of destruction, and then they
keenly feel the power of choice.

On the one hand, their soul
cries out, “Choose life !” And on
the other hand, the *yetzer hara*
exerts all its efforts to seduce them.
There isn't a Jew who hasn't faced
such a test at least once in their life.

We all know the power of the
struggle. The *yetzer hara* ignites
an inner fire within us, a terrible
burning passion and attraction
towards sin. We all experience
something akin to electric

currents flowing through our bodies, irregular breathing, and mental confusion. During the test, it seems as though these terrible sensations will never end !

Yet, despite this, we are commanded to overcome the *yetzer hara* and choose life !

Upon hearing Hashem's command, "Do not eat from the Tree of Knowledge," the forces of evil reacted with anticipation. Their eyes gleamed, and they eagerly rubbed their hands together in excitement...

They began their maneuver, and ultimately, Adam found himself standing before the Tree of Knowledge. We don't know exactly what he felt, but presumably, he also

felt a terrible burning passion, a consuming fire of desire...

Adam felt the strength of the struggle, he sensed the immense power of evil upon his flesh, and he took stock of the situation, "I'm going to live here in Gan Eden for billions of years, for eternity, me and the Tree of Knowledge. If that's the case, this test will never end. Every time I encounter the tree, I will once again experience these terrible sensations and have to deal with this difficulty..."

Adam failed the test, and ate from the tree !

Thus began the first battle between good and evil...

It's Shorter Than You Think

Adam HaRishon didn't know the great secret—the secret upon which the entire battle's victory depended. Hashem never brings a prolonged test upon a person. The test is always either for a few minutes or hours (in rare cases, slightly longer), and when one succeeds and

withstands the test (within the allotted time), they ascend, rise in level, and become purified. Thus, this reality no longer constitutes a test !

When one succeeds and withstands the test, a pure, holy spiritual light descends and envelops their mind, and from

there it continues, filling all the chambers of their heart with pure and pristine joy...

So it was with Adam HaRishon. Hashem gave him this test for only three hours! If he would've endured the difficulty for those three hours, he would've ascended to tremendous heights, and the tree would no longer have been a test for him!

Thus Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto zt"l, the Ramchal, writes,⁴ "Indeed, Adam HaRishon was truly a great sage, and it was incumbent upon him to investigate this matter thoroughly with his wisdom. He already knew the truth of the matter based on his wisdom—that everything he saw in opposition to what Hashem had informed him regarding the truth of the *tikkun* was nothing but an illusory lie, originating from the evil that Hashem created in order to reveal His true oneness, and with which to test Adam himself to give him merit.

If he had remained steadfast in

his *emuna* and had not succumbed to the *yetzer hara* but, on the contrary, had strengthened this *emuna* within his heart, he would have been considered as having attained the highest unity. For he had already seen and mentally portrayed the nature of evil, and through his wisdom, he comprehended that all the evil in the world is nothing but a creation from Hashem for His own honor.

Thus, it would have been sufficient for him to strengthen this *emuna* not to transgress the word of Hashem, and this would have lasted until the entrance of Shabbat Kodesh, as the sages state, and then Hashem would have done in one day that which he is doing now in six thousand years. That is, ultimately, He would have shown him, that that which he believed in His unity is true, for in an instant, he would have nullified all evil from the world..."

And because of this sin, something terrible occurred...

You Are Pardoned

The evil and impurity managed to penetrate within! From now on, evil no longer confronts the person from the outside, but from within.

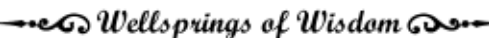
The *yetzer hara* succeeded in seizing control of the body's blood, and with its help, it battles the soul. Rebbe Nachman of Breslov writes,⁵ "There are various aspects to the *yetzer hara*. There are lowly and materialistic people whose *yetzer hara* is also lowly and coarse. But for most people, their *yetzer hara* is the blood itself, i.e., the blood in the left ventricle, which is strongest. The main cause of their confusion stems from the murkiness and muddle of the blood..."

On that day, the 1st of Tishrei, Adam HaRishon, his wife Chava, and the snake stood before Hashem. Hashem punished each one of them with ten curses! These are the words of the Midrash:⁶ Adam HaRishon sinned and was

liable to death and received forty lashes, for the world was cursed with forty curses because of his sin: ten for Adam, ten for Chava, ten for the snake, and ten upon the earth.

Another Midrash says:⁷ On Rosh Hashanah, during the first hour of the day, the thought of creating Adam arose. During the second hour, Hashem consulted with the ministering angels. During the third hour, He gathered his dust. During the fourth hour, He molded him. During the fifth hour, He shaped him. During the sixth hour, He made him a golem. During the seventh hour, He breathed a soul into him. During the eighth hour, He brought him into Gan Eden.

During the ninth hour, he was commanded not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. During the tenth hour, he transgressed. During the eleventh hour, he stood in judgment. During the twelfth hour, he was pardoned.



5. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 72).

6. Bamidbar Rabbah 5:4.

7. Vayikra Rabbah 29:1.

Hashem said to Adam, “This is a sign for your children: just as you stood before Me in judgment on this day and were pardoned, so too, in the future, your children will stand before Me in judgment on this day and be pardoned...”

The Jewish holidays are not merely historical dates, but a remembrance of days that have passed and are no longer.

“Hashem, Your word stands forever in heaven” (Tehillim 119:89) – that same Divine word that redeemed Am Israel from Egypt and split the sea before them continues to exist and exert its influence from generation to generation. Every year when a holiday arrives, its light is renewed, and its radiance affects us. Likewise, the words of Hashem’s judgment, which judged Adam HaRishon and ultimately pardoned him, flow down upon us each time the new year begins.

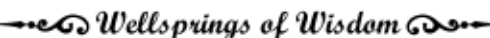
The Alter of Slabodka zt”l stood up, astonished, and said: Was Adam HaRishon truly

pardoned? Wasn’t he initially in a perfected world, residing in Gan Eden, with ministering angels roasting meat and straining wine for him?⁸ And all creatures of the world gathered around him, and he led them, saying,⁹ “Come, let us bow down and kneel. Let us kneel before Hashem our Maker” (Tehillim 95:6). His height reached the heavens, and he gazed from one end of the world to the other...

And now...

Rather, it was initially decreed upon him, “For on the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die” (Bereshit 2:17), and he was sentenced to die before the twelfth hour. He wouldn’t be able to receive the Shabbat. However, Hashem had mercy on him and granted him one thousand years of life.

“For he who is attached to all the living has hope” (Kohelet 9:4). As long as a person is alive, it is possible for him to rectify his flaws, “For a living dog is better than a dead lion” (ibid.).



8. Sanhedrin 59b.

9. Zohar HaKadosh (Vayechi 221b).

Adam HaRishon was granted life. Indeed, immediately, he embarked upon a tremendous act of teshuva lasting one hundred and thirty years. The Gemara says:¹⁰ When he saw that he was punished with death, he observed a fast for one hundred and thirty years, separated from his wife for one hundred and thirty years, and wore belts of fig leaves on his body for one hundred and thirty years.” Although he didn’t find an actual *tikkun* for his body, he still

found a fair solution:

He bequeathed seventy years of his life to David HaMelech.¹¹ From that, the throne of the King Mashiach was established. From him, life springs forth, for through the Mashiach, the world will be rectified, returning to its state before the sin.¹²

Adam HaRishon ultimately achieved *tikkun*, but we were left with the body intertwined with good and evil...

Don't Ignore Your Flesh

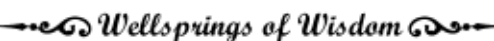
Every Jew consists of a body and a soul. The soul within them is a divine spark, constantly connected to Hashem, attaining awe-inspiring, lofty insights.

As for the body, it is distant from *Elokut*, coarse, and impervious to any divine revelation. The soul thus has no means to emit its sound.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

zt”l writes:¹³ Every person should display deep compassion towards the flesh of their body, illuminating it with every insight and perception that the soul experiences. It is crucial to ensure that the body is aware of these spiritual revelations, as it says, “Do not hide from your own flesh” (Yeshayahu 58:7).

Specifically “from your own flesh” – do not hide your eyes



10. Eruvin 18b.

11. Zohar HaKadosh (Lech Lecha 91a).

12. Asufat Ma’arachot (Devarim, p. 290).

13. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 22:5).

from showing compassion for your flesh, i.e., the flesh of your body, for one must demonstrate profound compassion for the body, striving to purify it so that it can be receptive to the insights and perceptions of the soul. This is because the soul of every person continuously witnesses and comprehends immensely elevated ideas, which the body remains unaware of. Therefore, it is incumbent upon each person to extend great compassion towards the flesh of their body, actively working towards its purification, enabling the soul to convey to it the perpetual insights it receives.

When the body aligns with this disposition, it becomes beneficial for the soul, particularly during moments when the soul experiences a temporary decline. However, when the body is clear and illuminated, it serves as a conduit for the soul's rejuvenation and elevation. Through the body's pleasures, the soul can recall and ascend to its own realm of fulfillment. Since the body is also inherently good and righteous, it does not become ensnared in

excessive indulgence. Consequently, the soul can ascend through the body's pleasures, returning to its rightful place of fulfillment.

Likewise, the enduring imprints left within the body, stemming from the prior enlightenment bestowed upon it by the soul, enable the soul to recall and ascend, returning to its elevated state.

This is the idea of, "From my flesh, I will behold G-d" (Iyov 19:26) – specifically emphasizing "from my flesh." It implies that through the medium of the body, one can behold divine perceptions, the very insights that the soul perpetually apprehends.

However, when the body exhibits brazenness, in the aspect of, "The dogs are brazen," the soul finds it challenging to maintain its support and closeness to the body, thereby hindering its ability to convey its perceptions. The soul risks becoming ensnared in the body's forceful and brazen attachment to earthly desires...

Blessed is the Who Hears

In our lowly state, we fail to comprehend. The soul emits sounds, perceives visions? What are we talking about?

But indeed, it is so, and every Jew feels it within their flesh.

When a Jew faces a test, such as having the opportunity to defile their eyes with forbidden sights or their mouth with forbidden speech—disparaging Talmidei Chachamim, *lashon hara*, etc.—then, at that moment, the familiar fire of the *yetzer hara* burns within them and drags them towards “failure.” Simultaneously, from a distance, a voice resonates, the voice of their soul, reaching their ears, “Remember, it is forbidden to do this.”

However, the body prevents them from heeding this voice. And if such a simple voice is unheard due to the brazenness of

the body, it is certainly even more challenging for the person to hear the other voices emanating from their soul.

Therefore, it is called the “brazenness” of the body, as it lacks true importance, for the main aspect is the soul. However, it forcefully dominates the person, aspiring to be the sole ruler (and to cast the soul aside).

At times, the brazenness of the body grows so strong that it proclaims, “Committing transgressions is fun. Why are they preventing me from enjoying myself? Do they not want me to be happy?!”

The prophet thus cries out, “Woe unto those who call evil good and good evil, who turn darkness into light and light into darkness, who make bitter sweet and sweet bitter” (Yeshayahu 5:20).

Don't Deceive Yourself

There are people who are now reading this discussion and thinking to themselves, “Baruch

Hashem, I serve Hashem properly, my body has no brazenness.” However, Rebbe Nachman of

Breslov zt"l already said that if a person could break the brazenness of their body, they would merit experiencing divine revelations!

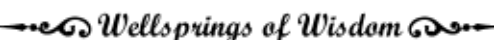
Thus he writes:¹⁴ There are people who think that by fasting and afflicting themselves, they become tzaddikim. But this is not the truth. For all the fasts they have observed are like a sack full of many holes, and even when they empty the sack, the holes remain. The body is called a sack, as the Tanna says, "Sharp scholar, open your sack."¹⁵ If they would truly examine themselves, they would see that after all the fasts, all their desires are still attached to their sack, i.e., their body. And not only do their own desires remain attached to their body, but also the desires inherited from their father from the moment of birth, because their father didn't sanctify himself at the time of conception. These desires are also still attached to their body. Certainly, if they were to see all this, great fear would fall upon

them, for they would see how they stand at a very low level.

This is the meaning of the verse, "And as they began emptying their sacks, each one's bundle of money was found in his sack. And when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they became afraid. Their father Yaakov said to them, "You are making me lose my children! Yosef is gone, Shimon is gone, and now you want to take Binyamin! All these things are happening to me!" (Bereshit 42:35-36)

"And as they began emptying their sacks," even after all the fasts, symbolizing the act of emptying the sack, which represents the body, still, "each one's bundle (צָרוֹר – tzeror) of money (כֶּסֶף – kaspo) was found in his sack" — their desires (כֶּסֶף – kaspo) remained bound (צָרוֹר – tzarur) to their sack, i.e., their body.

"And when they and their father saw the bundles (צָרוֹרוֹת – tzerorot) of money (כֶּסֶפֶיָּהֶם – kaspehem)," meaning, not only



14. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 10:4).

15. Shabbat 152a.

Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelech - Run Away !

their own desires (כַּסְפֵּיהֶם – *kaspehem*) remain bound (צְרוּרוֹת – *tzerorot*), but also “they and their father,” i.e., their father’s desires, had not been removed from them. As a result, “they became afraid,” they were overcome with fear...

The general rule is that as long as a person has not succeeded in subduing the brazenness of the

body, they must know that they are still immersed in all their desires and have not yet emerged from the profane to the holy, not even by a single thread !

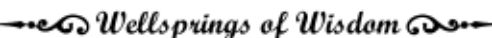
In order to merit and clothe ourselves in the garments of holiness and receive illumination from the soul, we must purify the brazenness of the body...

Run Away !

Once we acknowledge our place, it becomes our responsibility to find ways to avoid falling into sin. While the teachings of *Chazal* offer valuable advice, the intensity of our bodily desires can make it incredibly challenging to implement these teachings. Therefore, the only solution is to avoid the temptation altogether ! We must fulfill the saying of *Chazal*,¹⁶ “Run away from sin !”

If, *chas v’shalom*, the *yetzer hara* of a person tries to entice them to look at forbidden sights, they should remember Yosef HaTzaddik

and muster all their strength not to fall into the clutches of the *yetzer hara*. Instead, they should fulfill the saying of *Chazal*, “Run away from sin” – just as Yosef HaTzaddik fulfilled it when Potiphar’s wife attempted to force him into sin, “and she caught him by his garment... and he left his garment in her hand and fled, and he went outside” (Bereshit 39:12). A Jew must flee from sin and not compromise their sanctity. It’s forbidden for a Jew to enter a place they know could be troublesome. That’s not a Jew’s place. We must remember, “The Jewish people are holy.”¹⁷



16. Pirkei Avot 4:2.

17. Shabbat 86a.

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt”l:¹⁸ *Yirat shamayim* is the basis for “turning away from evil,” for the main purpose of *yirah* is to keep a person away from negative things. For example, when Yosef was a servant in Potiphar’s house, he found himself in a very complicated situation.

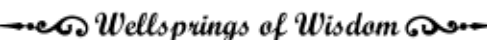
Yosef had extraordinary beauty, as the Torah testifies, “Yosef was handsome in form and appearance” (Bereshit 39:6). His great beauty caused Potiphar’s wife to desire him in her heart. Therefore, she tried in every possible way to entice Yosef into sin. These temptations of Potiphar’s wife and the violent acts she carried out continued not for a day, a week, or a month, but for an entire year, morning, afternoon, and evening, as it says, “And it came to pass as she spoke to Yosef day after day” (Bereshit 39:10), and *Chazal* explain in the Midrash¹⁹ that whenever it says “day after day,” it means twelve months.

At that time, Yosef was a seventeen-year-old young man.

His *yetzer hara* was at its peak, and Potiphar’s wife was exceptionally beautiful. Yosef’s test was extremely difficult. Nevertheless, the *yirah* he had of Hashem empowered him to resist falling into her trap, as it says, “How can I commit this great evil, and sin against G-d ?” (Bereshit 39:9).

But after a full year of various enticements and temptations, Yosef no longer could resist the temptation and almost fell, as it says, “And it came to pass as she spoke to Yosef day after day... and he went into the house to do his work” (Bereshit 39:10-11). However, at the last moment before falling, suddenly, he saw the likeness of his father Yaakov in the window. Yaakov held in his hands the *choshen* (breastplate) that would be placed upon the heart of the Kohen Gadol, adorned with twelve precious stones, each engraved with the names of the twelve holy tribes.

Yaakov said to him, “Know, my son, if you overcome your *yetzer*



18. Betzur Yarum (Vol. 10 – ch. 41, p. 8).

19. Midrash Tanchuma (Vayeshev, 8).

and flee from here, your name will be engraved upon the holy stones of the *choshen*. But if, *chas v'shalom*, you don't withstand the temptation, and fall, I will be forced to uproot you from it, and you will lose your place among the holy tribes." Upon hearing this, Yosef gathered all his strength, "and he left his garment in her hand and fled, and he went outside" (Bereshit 39:12).

After Yosef successfully resisted the temptation and fled from sin, he found himself facing a harsh imprisonment that lasted for twelve years. Despite the challenging conditions of the prison, Yosef remained remarkably cheerful and full of laughter. The sight of him being so joyful puzzled the other prisoners, who were visibly distraught and in tears.

Curious about Yosef's unshakable demeanor, they asked him, "How can you laugh and find joy in this place? The conditions are so strict and unforgiving." Yosef's response revealed the depth of his character and inner strength. He explained that his laughter stemmed from a profound sense of happiness and contentment. His joy

didn't come from a life of comfort or freedom but from successfully overcoming the sweetness of sin and not damaging his relationship with Hashem.

Yosef's laughter was an outward expression of his victory over temptation and his unwavering commitment to living a life of holiness and righteousness. It was a testament to his resilience and devotion to Hashem, even in the most challenging and adverse circumstances.

To prevent any foolish claims that Yosef had sinned behind closed doors, Hashem added an additional letter to his name, transforming it into "Yehosef," as it says, "He set it as a testimony for Yehosef" (Tehillim 81:6). This means that Hashem testified on Yosef's behalf that he didn't sin, even behind closed doors, attesting to Yosef's innocence and protecting his reputation.

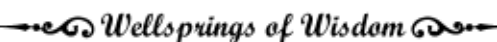
Yosef's unwavering determination during that pivotal test not only brought about personal growth and triumph for himself but also held profound significance for the

entire nation of Israel in the generations to come. As the Midrash recounts,²⁰ when Yosef descended to Egypt, he remained resolute in preserving his sanctity and guarding himself from immorality, setting an extraordinary example of righteousness. This commitment to holiness had far-reaching effects, and as a result, all of Bnei Israel were blessed with the strength to maintain their sanctity throughout their sojourn in Egypt.

When the time came for the momentous exodus from Egypt, the nation found themselves standing on the shores of the Red Sea, with the relentless pursuit of the Egyptians closing in behind them. In this dire and seemingly hopeless situation, Moshe's fervent prayers alone were not enough to part the waters of the sea. It was then that Moshe brought Yosef's coffin before the sea, as recounted in the verses, "The sea saw and fled" (Tehillim 114:3).

In the Midrash,²¹ *Chazal* inquire, "What did the sea see that caused it to split?" Their answer reveals the profound impact of Yosef's righteousness and sanctity. The sea, witnessing Yosef's sacred coffin, recognized the spiritual strength and purity that he had instilled in the people of Israel. It was Yosef's merit, together with the sanctity of the nation he had influenced, that caused the sea to perform its miraculous split, paving the way for the miraculous redemption of the Jewish people.

In this way, Yosef's virtuous conduct during the challenging encounter with Potiphar's wife became an enduring source of inspiration and protection for his descendants. His moral victory not only safeguarded his own legacy but also granted Am Israel the spiritual fortitude to endure the hardships of slavery in Egypt and emerge as a holy nation ready to embark on their journey towards the fulfillment of the Divine promise.



20. Vayikra Rabbah 32:5.

21. Shocher Tov 114.

Let us draw valuable lessons from the exemplary conduct of Yosef HaTzaddik, who embodied the wisdom of “The wise person’s eyes are in their head” (Kohelet 2:14). Yosef’s remarkable ability to foresee and contemplate the consequences of his actions from the outset serves as a profound guiding principle for us. When faced with tests that challenge the preservation of our holiness and tempt us to gaze upon forbidden sights, we must not allow ourselves to succumb to the enticement of the *yetzer hara*, *chas v’shalom*.

Instead, let us emulate Yosef’s wisdom by keeping our eyes focused on the long-term outcome. We should ponder the potential heavy toll that such actions could exact upon our future, our relationships with others, and most importantly, our connection with Hashem. By engaging in this thoughtful contemplation, we open ourselves to receive a unique strength from Hashem, enabling us to firmly refrain from sin.

In essence, the key lies in exercising foresight and recognizing that yielding to

momentary temptations may lead to grave consequences and spiritual repercussions. By adopting this wise and mindful approach, we fortify ourselves against the allure of sin and reinforce our commitment to living a life of holiness and righteousness.

Let us consider a scenario where a genuinely good and innocent woman finds herself at work, facing “progress” with her boss which is deeply tempting. The *yetzer hara* starts whispering in her heart, presenting a deceptive narrative, “What do you truly gain from your husband ? He treats you poorly, constantly yells at you, and is financially struggling. On the other hand, your boss respects you and offers everything you desire if only you yield to his temptations.”

This woman now faces an immense test, one that challenges her commitment to righteousness and moral principles. In this critical moment, she should take inspiration from the conduct of Yosef HaTzaddik. Yosef, too, confronted an intense test, finding himself entirely alone without the support of friends or family. Yet,

he remained steadfast in his dedication to Hashem and resisted the seduction of Potiphar's wife, choosing to "Run away from sin," as *Chazal* advise.

By recalling Yosef's resilience and drawing strength from his example, she can confront her own bitter trial. Remembering that Yosef's unwavering commitment led to his triumph over temptation, she too can find the fortitude to navigate this challenging situation and maintain her integrity.

In moments of moral conflict, the memory of righteous figures like Yosef serves as a guiding light, showing us the path of righteousness and strengthening our resolve to resist temptation. By following in the footsteps of our spiritual predecessors and adhering to the teachings of *Chazal*, we can triumph over adversity and emerge with our moral compass intact, reflecting our commitment to living a life of virtue and holiness.

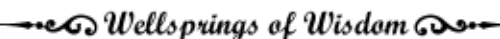
The Binding

The 28th of Elul in the year 2083 from the creation of the world holds a profound place in the annals of history. On that day, Hashem revealed Himself to Avraham Avinu, saying, "Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Itzchak, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you" (Bereshit 22:2)

In the Beit HaMikdash, the process of offering a burnt offering

was as follows:²² they would slaughter the animal, collect its blood, and sprinkle it on the altar. Then, they would remove the animal's skin (which was given to the priests), dissect the animal, and burn all the pieces on the altar, as it says, "The Kohen shall burn it all on the altar" (Vayikra 1:9)

Therefore, Avraham Avinu had to take with him a knife for slaughtering and wood and fire to burn all of Itzchak's limbs on the altar, as it says, "Avraham



took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Itzchak his son, and he took the fire and a knife in his hand” (Bereshit 22:6)

The verse continues, “And they went both of them together” (ibid.) – Itzchak willingly went together with his father, with wholehearted devotion. They journeyed together for three days. On the 1st of Tishrei in the year 2084 from the creation of the world, at midday on Rosh Hashanah, Avraham Avinu built the altar and bound his son Itzchak...

Such a command from Hashem happened only once in the course of history!

However, we must know that even today, there is a concept of the “binding of Itzchak,” when

the *yetzer hara* burns within a person, and the fiery desire ignites all the limbs of the body.

If a person succumbs to their *yetzer hara* and transgresses, that fire will cool down and give them respite...

But a person who remains steadfast, fulfilling the will of their Creator, and refrains from transgressing, and is ready to surrender their body to this harsh burning, willing to be consumed in that dreadful fire for the sanctification of Hashem’s name, at that moment, they bound themselves on the altar, just like Itzchak Avinu, and sanctify Hashem’s name. Praiseworthy is such a person!

The Power of Renewal

Every Jew goes through many tests throughout the year, and whether they have succeeded in these tests or, *chas v’shalom*, have not, there are moments when they just feel exhausted...

Hashem, our Merciful Father, granted us the gift of Rosh Hashanah to renew our strengths

and to give us the opportunity to begin a new chapter...

Thus it says in our parasha, “You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d: your heads, your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your children, your wives, and your convert who is in your camp;

from your woodcutters to the water drawers” (Devarim 29:9-10)

The Alter Rebbe explains²³ that this verse refers to Rosh Hashanah. “You are standing today” – this is Rosh Hashanah. And on that day, Rosh Hashanah, all of Am Israel stand before Hashem, from the greatest tzaddikim of the generation to the simplest woodcutters.

They all stand before Hashem, hiding under His wings, which gives their souls the strength to stand firm anew, to strengthen themselves, and to receive new drive and aspirations !

Before explaining how our strengths are renewed on Rosh Hashanah, we’ll write a few words about Rosh Hashanah...

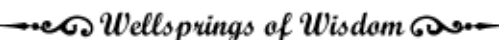
Chance For Renewal

The Gemara says:²⁴ This world, which is so familiar to us, was created to exist in its configuration for six thousand years. At the conclusion of the six thousand years, the Mashiach will be revealed, the dead will be resurrected, and the Third Temple will be built. Then, when the six thousand years are completed, the world will be desolated.”

Afterward, Hashem will rebuild it again, but this time it will be a more spiritual, pure, and refined world.

There’s a dispute in the Gemara about how many years the world will be desolate. According to the opinion of Rav Katina, the world will be desolate for one thousand years, as it says, “Hashem alone will be exalted on that day” (Yeshayahu 2:11). This refers to the “day” of Hashem (one day of Hashem is equivalent to one thousand years of ours), on which Hashem will be exalted alone, and the whole world will be desolate.

According to the opinion of Abaye, the world will be desolate for two thousand years,



23. Likutei Torah (Nitzavim, p. 44).

24. Rosh Hashanah 31a.

as it says, “He will revive us after the two days. On the third day, He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him” (Hoshea 6:2). “After the two days,” the seventh and eighth millennium, Hashem will return and renew His world, and we will live before Him.

From the words of the Gemara we learn that during the course of the world, there will be three types of conduct, and in each period, Hashem will bestow a different vitality upon the world, according to which the world will be guided.

The first conduct will be during the first six thousand years, which includes the first type of vitality.

The second conduct will be during the years when the world will be desolate.

The third conduct will be from the eighth (or ninth) millennium onwards, and it will bring a new type of vitality to the world.

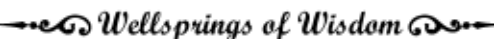
Though it is explained that the six thousand years are one type

of conduct and vitality, in truth, this is only in general, because in specific terms, every year is entirely new, with a completely new conduct and vitality!

Rebbe Shneur Zalman of Liadi zt”l found a source for this in the Torah, as follows:²⁵ In Parashat Ekev, the Torah praises the Land of Israel and states, “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 the end of the year” (Devarim 11:12).

The intent of the verse is that Hashem watches over the Land of Israel continually, “from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.”

At first glance, the words “the end of the year” seem unnecessary, as it marks the beginning of the upcoming “start of the year,” and even in the new year, Hashem watches over us. Therefore, why write it? Would it not be more appropriate to write, “the eyes of Hashem your



G-d are always upon it, forever”?

Rather, the Torah reveals to us a secret: every year, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, when the moon is concealed, the light that illuminated the world in the past year returns to its source, leaving the world in an intermediate state (in a state of concealment and lack of recognition) until the following day. And through the blasts we sound with the shofar and the holy prayers we recite, the light of the

new year descends upon the world. This light is a “loftier, new light that has not illuminated the world since the beginning of time.”

Since on Rosh Hashanah, the entirety of the world’s existence and its creations is entirely renewed, every person has the opportunity, on Rosh Hashanah, to completely renew themselves and be transformed into a new creation !

Before we continue, we’ll mention another point...

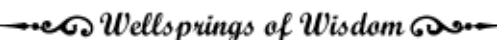
Drawing Down Abundance

The Gemara says²⁶ that on Rosh Hashanah, all the inhabitants of the world pass before Hashem like a flock of sheep, as it says, “He who fashions the hearts of them all, who discerns all their doings” (Tehillim 33:15).

On Rosh Hashanah, everyone is evaluated regarding the “budget” they will receive for the upcoming year. This “budget” includes all aspects of life for the

coming year, such as health, joy, livelihood, and so on. The flow of abundance is channeled through three pipes known as “*Bnei*” (children), “*Chayei*” (life), and “*M’zonei*” (sustenance).²⁷ The measure of abundance that descends throughout the year, both material and spiritual, depends on these three channels.

To merit receiving the abundance from these channels, one must pray before Hashem with



26. Rosh Hashanah 16a.

27. Moed Katan 28a.

simplicity, sincerity, and wholeheartedness. It's important to understand where to place emphasis, to know when to press the right "button." In the army, they say, "Training is tough, battle is easy." Likewise, those who understand the required effort during these days will act with extreme caution and humbleness, asking for forgiveness, repenting wholeheartedly, and aiming to improve their ways.

On the evening of Rosh Hashanah, the influence of the past year begins to fade away, and until morning, the world is in a state of sleep. During this time, one may feel drowsy and less aware.

The shofar blasts on Rosh Hashanah then awaken the world to a new and elevated flow of abundance for the coming year. However, the abundance of the new year is not yet divided.

Then, throughout the Ten Days of Repentance, the abundance is gradually distributed. One of the signs that the judgment process is active is when a person stands in prayer on Rosh Hashanah and suddenly feels the urge to

weep. This crying is a sign that, at that moment, their soul is being judged on high. Therefore, they should perform sincere teshuva at that moment, and say, "I hereby fulfill the positive mitzvah from the Torah of complete teshuva, as it says, "And you shall return to Hashem your G-d and listen to His voice" (Devarim 30:2).

However, it's not enough to do teshuva only for sins between man and Hashem, such as desecrating Shabbat, consuming forbidden foods, or neglecting family purity. One must also do complete teshuva for any wrongs committed against others. If a person knows they have caused harm to another person, whether physically, financially, or emotionally, they should seek reconciliation and appeasement before Rosh Hashanah (or at least before Yom Kippur). Additionally, they should commit to making every effort in the future to avoid causing pain to any Jew.

One must not delay this process, for the pain caused to another individual may weigh heavily against them during the judgment

on Rosh Hashanah, delaying or even preventing a positive verdict and a sweet and good year, *chas v'shalom*. Therefore, one should act promptly and try to make amends

with anyone they may have harmed. Only then can they truly merit a complete and sincere teshuva and the inflow of the new and elevated light of the new year...

Proper Preparation For Rosh Hashanah

HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l writes:²⁸

Every year, the Shabbat of Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelech falls adjacent to the holy day of Rosh Hashanah, the day on which each individual stands before Hashem, and all events of the coming year are decreed upon them.

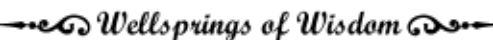
Therefore, undoubtedly, there are many wonderful hints in our parasha, teaching us about the preparations required from a person to be inscribed and sealed on this holy day for a good and sweet year, both materially and spiritually.

Indeed, right from the opening verse of the parasha, “You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d” (Devarim 29:9), we can find a remarkable hint about

the primary preparation needed from a person to come out favorably in their judgment on Rosh Hashanah. According to the words of *Chazal*,²⁹ every place where the term “today” is mentioned, it hints at Rosh Hashanah.

Thus, the Torah says, “You are standing today,” which means that if you wish to stand upright on Rosh Hashanah, as a person who emerges successfully from their judgment, the advice is, “all of you,” meaning you should be united with all of Am Israel, loving each one wholeheartedly. By doing so, you are assured to come out favorably in your judgment and receive a good inscription and seal.

According to what has been said, we can also explain what is



28. Imrei Noam (Nitzavim – Maamar 3).

29. Rashi on Iyov 1:6.

told about the Shunammite woman to whom Elisha HaNavi came to stay at her house, and Elisha wanted to do her a favor for the wonderful hospitality, so he sent his servant to tell her, “Behold, you have gone to great trouble for us; what can be done for you? Would you like me to speak on your behalf to the king...” (Melachim II 4:13) and the woman answered him, “I dwell among my people” (ibid.).

The Zohar explains³⁰ that this incident occurred on Rosh Hashanah, and the intention of the Navi was to intercede on her behalf before Hashem so that she would emerge righteous in her judgment. To this, she responded, “I dwell among my people.”

According to what was explained above, her intention in this answer is that because she strived to always be united with Am Israel and she truly loved every Jew, she was guaranteed to emerge righteous in her judgment, and thus, she felt no

need for Elisha’s intercession.

As explained above, this unity is also alluded to in the following verse at the beginning of our parasha, “your heads, your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your children, your wives, and your convert who is in your camp; from your woodcutters to the water drawers” (Devarim 29:9). As Rashi explains, this verse includes all levels of the Jewish people, from the leaders and prominent scholars to the simplest men, women, and children.

The Torah hints that one should love and respect even the simplest and humblest Jew just as they love and respect the great righteous leaders. Only through this can there be true and complete unity.

The Torah continues and says, “all of you, before Hashem your G-d” (Devarim 29:9), which means that if one is truly united with each individual Jew and loves them with a complete heart, they should know with complete faith that they are very close to Hashem,

standing before Him, and nothing is more virtuous than that.

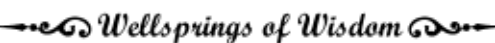
Indeed, there is a profound connection between the above teachings and the primary mitzvah of Rosh Hashanah, the mitzvah of blowing the shofar. *Chazal* say³¹ that the reason for the mitzvah of blowing the shofar is to remind us of the merit of Itzchak Avinu. Thus, blowing the shofar aims to awaken Itzchak's merit.

And *Chazal* reveal³² that in the future, Hashem will say to Avraham, "Your children have sinned against Me," and Avraham will respond, "Master of the Universe! Let them be eradicated to sanctify Your name." Then the same will be said to Yaakov, perhaps because he experienced the pain of raising children, he will seek mercy for Am Israel, and he too will reply, "Master of the Universe! Let them be eradicated to sanctify Your name." Finally, the question will be posed to Itzchak, and it is he who

will intercede on behalf of Am Israel with words of merit, and they will emerge righteous before Hashem.

Therefore, if one wishes to rely on the merit of Itzchak to come out favorably in their judgment on Rosh Hashanah, they must possess the characteristic of Itzchak, judging every Jew favorably and loving each one wholeheartedly. By doing so, they will awaken the merit of Itzchak and come out favorably in their judgment.

Therefore, we find³³ that there is great power in mentioning the name of the holy Tanna, Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess, to bring about wondrous salvations. As Rabbi Meir himself instructed that guard, "Say, 'God of Meir answer me!' And you will be saved." All of our ancestors also used this expression, and through it, they witnessed tremendous miracles at all times. The reason for this lies in Rabbi Meir's view,³⁴ that even a Jew who



31. Rosh Hashanah 16a.

32. Shabbat 89b.

33. Avodah Zara 18a.

34. Kiddushin 36a.

has sinned greatly before Hashem is still considered His child. Since he invoked an immense merit for Am Israel, therefore mentioning his name brings about salvation.

And with this, it will also be understood what the Arizal revealed³⁵ that Rabbi Meir Baal HaNess is buried in an upright position – unlike other people who are buried lying down. This is to allude that even after Rabbi Meir's passing, he stands ready to intercede with merit on behalf of Am Israel at all times.

This is also indicated in the word "שופר" (shofar), which comes from the verse, "בְּאֶדְיָן מֶלֶכָּא בְּשִׁפְרָא יָקוּם בְּנִגְהָא" (Then, at the first light of dawn, the king

arose) (Daniel 6:20). The word "shofar" hints at "light," meaning the influence of kindness and merit on Israel. Therefore, for the person who blows the shofar to achieve the result they desire and to be absolved of all judgments, they must possess the attribute of bestowing light and kindness upon Am Israel.

Similarly, the shofar signifies the gathering and unity of Am Israel, as stated in the Amidah, "Blow the shofar... and gather us together." This hints that on Rosh Hashanah, especially during the blowing of the shofar, the essential thing is to unite with all of Am Israel, wherever they may be, with genuine and sincere love.

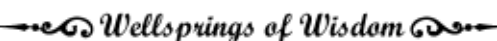
Let's return to the strengthening one's powers...

The Power of The Shofar

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov zt"l continues:³⁶

Know that through hearing the sound of the shofar on Rosh

Hashanah, the brazenness of the body is broken, and then the soul draws near and attaches itself to the body. This is what is meant



35. Shaar HaGilgulim (Introduction 37).

36. Likutei Moharan I (Torah 22:5).

by the verse, “From the sound of my sighing, my flesh clings to my bones” (Tehillim 102:6).

The sound of the shofar is in the aspect of “From the sound of my sighing,” and it breaks the brazenness of a person’s body, as it says, “If a shofar is blown in a city, will the people not tremble ?” (Amos 3:6).

This is represented by three types of shofar blasts: *Tekiah*, *Shevarim*, and *Teruah*.

Tekiah – represents the strong sounds, a powerful voice.

Shevarim – represents the broken sounds, through which the brazenness of the body is broken.

Teruah (תְּרוּעָה) – represents the merit to draw closer to holiness and to the true tzaddikim, who are called “רוֹעִים” (*ro'im* – shepherds), as it says, “You shall shepherd My people” (Shmuel II 5:2).

This is, “He circumcised the flesh of their foreskin on that very day” (Bereshit 17:23), and it is

also written, “On that very day, Avraham was circumcised” (Bereshit 17:26), “that very day” alludes to the sound of the shofar, the mitzvah of the day, as it says, “May Hashem answer you on the day of distress” (Tehillim 20:2). Through this, the foreskin of the flesh is circumcised and broken, and he receives the light of the soul.

The explanation of his words: On Rosh Hashanah, the entire creation is renewed, and new powers are given to everyone, allowing for a fresh start.

When a Jew merits hearing the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, their soul is renewed, and the brazenness of their body is broken, and their soul begins to shine.

May Hashem help us during the next week until Rosh Hashanah, to prepare properly for Rosh Hashanah and to spiritually ready ourselves to hear the sound of the shofar.

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Shabbat Times Nitzavim-Vayelech 23rd of Elul, 5783

City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	7:00 pm	7:57 pm	8:28 pm
Miami	7:16 pm	8:08 pm	8:45 pm
Los Angeles	6:52 pm	7:46 pm	8:21 pm
Montreal	7:02 pm	8:03 pm	8:30 pm
Toronto	7:24 pm	8:23 pm	8:52 pm
London	7:15 pm	8:21 pm	8:42 pm
Jerusalem	6:39 pm	7:28 pm	8:14 pm
Tel Aviv	6:36 pm	7:25 pm	8:10 pm
Haifa	6:36 pm	7:25 pm	8:10 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:36 pm	7:24 pm	8:10 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

We must be aware that this generation eagerly looks up to us, expecting nurturing parenthood and exemplary leadership. A child raised in a home with a strong educational foundation never witnesses their parents crossing moral boundaries or showing disrespect.

Instead, they constantly observe their parents cherishing each other with genuine love and happiness. When such a child grows up, they proudly say, "I was raised in a loving home, and I will impart the same values to my own children."



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