



“You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d”

The Unity of Klal Yisrael Who Are the 600,000 Letters of the Torah Prepares for the Renewal of Creation on Rosh HaShanah through the Torah

On the auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh, we will read the double parshiyos of Nitzavim-Vayeilech. The Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 428, 4) teaches us that we read parshas Nitzavim annually prior to Rosh HaShanah. This is based on the teaching in the Gemara (Megillah 31b) that Ezra HaSofer arranged the Torah-readings methodically such that Yisrael would always read the curses—the Rebuke—in parshas Ki Savo prior to Rosh HaShanah: **“כדי שתכלה—השנה וקללותיה”**—so that the year should end along with its curses.

Tosafos (ibid.) explain that we do not want to read the curses of Ki Savo adjacent to Rosh HaShanah: **Because we want to create an interruption by reading one parsha on the Shabbas prior to Rosh HaShanah that does not contain any curses; so that the curses will not be associated with Rosh HaShanah.** To accomplish this, we interpose parshas Nitzavim, or as is the case this year Nitzavim-Vayeilech, between the litany of curses and the New Year.

On Shabbas Parshas Nitzavim HKB”H Begins to Provide the Bounty of Rosh HaShanah

We will begin by introducing the marvelous, sacred words of the Be’er Mayim Chaim. He explains the rationale for the institution of reading parshas Nitzavim prior to Rosh HaShanah based on a statement in the

Zohar hakadosh (Yisro 88a): **“כל ברכאן דלעילא ותתא ביומא שביעאה תליין”**—**all heavenly and earthly Berachos depend on the seventh day.** Accordingly, on Shabbas parshas Nitzavim, the Shabbas preceding Rosh HaShanah, HKB”H begins to deliver the abundant good that He has in store for us in the new year. We will summarize his sacred words:

All the Berachos, beneficial things, and kindness that will happen during the week to the world in general or to any individual, all are related to and come from the previous Shabbas. It is when the source of life for this good or berachah or the like is blessed. It extends from there to the six weekdays; each day receives its appropriate benefit and berachah . . .

Hence, the Shabbas before Pesach is called Shabbas HaGadol, since the miracle of “yetzias Mitzrayim” was already set in motion on that Shabbas. It encompassed all the berachah for the next six days. It is called Shabbas HaGadol to reflect the greatness and the miracle to be revealed . . .

Thus, it is apparent that this also applies to the great, awesome day on which His people, Yisrael, are judged—Rosh HaShanah—on which He allots their livelihoods and sustenance. Everything stems from the wellspring of the Shabbas before

it. Therefore, the Shulchan Aruch states that we always read parshas Nitzavim—which alludes to Rosh HaShanah (the word “hayom” in the opening passuk)—prior to Rosh HaShanah, . It is because the new year is alluded to and enacted on the Shabbas preceding it.

In this vein, the Be’er Mayim Chaim explains the wonderful allusion in the passuk at the beginning of the parshas Nitzavim (Devarim 29, 9): **“אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני ה'—you are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d.** According to the Zohar hakadosh (Pinchas 231a), wherever it says **“ויהי היום”**, it is alluding to Rosh HaShanah. It proves its point by referring to the following passuk (Iyov 1, 6): **ויהי היום ויבוא בני האלהים להתייצב על ה' ויבוא גם השטן בתוכם, ויהי היום דא ראש השנה דקוב”ה קאים למידן עלמא.”** **“It happened one day; the angels came to stand before Hashem, and the Satan, too, came among them.”** **“ויהי היום”** refers to Rosh HaShanah, the day on which HKB”H sits in judgment of the world. Elsewhere, the Zohar (Bo 32b) interprets **בני האלהים**—literally, **the sons of G-d**—as the prosecuting angels, led by the Satan, who come to accuse Yisrael of wrongdoing. Accordingly: **“You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d”** is saying that on Rosh HaShanah all of Yisrael are standing before HKB”H to be held accountable for everything they did during the past year.

In truth, all of our sacred sefarim interpret **“אתם נצבים היום”** as a reference to Rosh HaShanah—such as the Ma’or Einayim, Ma’or V’Shemesh, Beis Aharon, Tiferes Shlomo, bas Ayin, Yismach Moshe, and many more. Among them is the Toldos Yaakov Yosef, who adds that HKB”H hints to us in this passuk how to be acquitted of our wrongdoings on Rosh HaShanah: **“ובזה יובן אתם נצבים כולכם היום בראש השנה, שיש לכם תקומה כשאתם כולכם באחדות אחד, מזה שאין כן כשיש פירוד שאומר כל אחד שלום יהיה לי, אז והבדילו ה' לרעה וגו’.** The key to success is **לכך עצה היעוצה לתווך השלום מראש השנה.”** Therefore, we should start the new year with peace and harmony as a people.

Ten Categories of Jews Corresponding to the Aseres HaDibros

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to elaborate on the relationship between Rosh HaShanah and Jewish unity. We will refer to a fascinating teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Yisro 82a) from the divine Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. He points out that this passuk enumerates ten categories of Jews: **“אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני ה' אלקיכם, ראשיכם, שבטיכם, זקניכם, ושוטריכם, כל איש ישראל, טפכם, נשיכם, וגרך אשר בקרב מחוגיך, מחוטב הים—עציר, עד שואב מימין”** **“your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers—all the men of Yisrael; your small children, your women, and your convert who is in the midst of your camp, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water.** Corresponding to them, Bnei Yisrael received the Aseres HaDibros—the Ten Commandments—at Matan Torah.

Following his lead, we will endeavor to explain the intimate relationship between Rosh HaShanah and the ten levels that exist within the people of Yisrael based on a fundamental principle taught by the impeccable Sefas Emes (Shabbas Teshuvah 5662): **The Aseres Yimei Teshuvah (Ten Days of Repentance) correspond to the Ten Utterances.** Clearly, he is referring to the following Mishnah (Avos 5, 1): **“בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם, ומה תלמוד לומר, והלא במאמר אחד יכול להיבראות, אלא להיפרע מן הרשעים שמאבדין את העולם שנברא בעשרה מאמרות, וליתן שכר The world was created by means of “ten utterances.” What does this come to teach us? Indeed, it could have been created with a single utterance; but this way allows for retribution from the wicked—who destroy the world that was created with ten utterances—and the bestowal of ample reward to the righteous—who sustain the world that was created with ten utterances.**

With this understanding, the Sefas Emes asserts that on every Rosh HaShanah HKB”H renews creation with the Ten Utterances just as He created the world initially with the Ten Utterances. Thus, the tzaddikim, who sustain the world with their study of Torah and

performance of mitzvos, are active participants in the renewal of creation with the Ten Utterances. The reshaim, however, whose evil deeds and transgressions corrupt and destroy the world that was created with the Ten Utterances, destroy the conduits that provide blessings and abundant good and are incapable of participating in the renewal of creation.

For this reason, HKB”H, in His infinite mercy and kindness, gave us the Aseres Yimei Teshuvah. During the ten days from Rosh HaShanah to Yom HaKippurim, every Jew is able to rectify via teshuvah and good deeds the damage he caused to the Ten Utterances. In this merit, HKB”H will renew the creation with the Ten Utterances. Every Jew who participated in this renewal will merit receiving abundant good from the conduits of plenty generated by the Ten Utterances.

It appears that we can expand on this concept based on the following passuk (Shemos 24, 12): **וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה עֲלֵה אֵלַי הַהָרָה וְהִיא שָׁם וְאֶתְנָה לְךָ אֶת לִוְחֹת הָאֲבֵן וְהַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת. Hashem said to Moshe, “Ascend to Me, to the mountain, and be there, and I shall give you the ‘luchos’ of stone and the Torah, and the mitzvah that I have written to instruct them.”** Here Rashi comments that all 613 mitzvos are included in the Aseres HaDibros.

Additionally, the Zohar hakadosh (ibid. 93b) teaches that the Aseres HaDibros align with the Ten Utterances with which the world was created. Thus, tzaddikim who fulfill all the mitzvos of the Torah encompassed by the Aseres HaDibros are sustaining the world that was created with the Ten Utterances. As mentioned, in their merit, HKB”H renews creation annually on Rosh HaShanah with those Ten Utterances.

As we know, however, it is impossible for any single individual to actually fulfill all of the mitzvos, since there are mitzvos only a kohen or only a levi or only a Yisrael can perform. Therefore, the solution proposed by our sacred sefarim is for all Jews to unite as a single body—like one man with one heart. In this manner, the mitzvos performed by every Jew are grouped together; thus, it is considered as if every individual Jew fulfilled all the mitzvos of the Torah.

This clarifies for us the amazing connection between parshas Nitzavim and Rosh HaShanah. As we have learned, the word **“הַיּוֹם”** in the opening passuk of parshas Nitzavim refers to Rosh HaShanah, the day on which we want HKB”H to renew the world that He created with the Ten Utterances. **“You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d”** to unite as one to renew the creation with the Ten Utterances. Then the passuk enumerates the ten levels and categories of Jews that comprise the people of Yisrael: **“Your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers—all the men of Yisrael; your small children, your women, and your convert who is in the midst of your camp, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water.”** They correspond to the Aseres HaDibros that align with the Ten Utterances. In other words, through the union of these ten categories, Yisrael are able to renew the creation accomplished with the Ten Utterances.

Peace and Harmony Among the 600,000 Neshamos of Yisrael Portends Lasting Berachah

Since we are approaching the crucial Shabbas that precedes Rosh HaShanah, it behooves us to explore what else HKB”H alluded to us in the opening passuk of the parsha: **“אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני ה' אלקיכם”**. Our sefarim often refer to the teaching in the Zohar Chadash (Midrash HaNe’elam Shir HaShirim) that the Torah is composed of 600,000 letters that align with the 600,000 neshamos of Yisrael. The Megaleh Amukos on Va’etchanan (186) writes that this is alluded to by the name **ישראל** which is an acronym for **יִשׁ שְׁשִׁים רִבּוּא אֲזוּתוֹת לְתוֹרָה**—**there are 600,000 letters in the Torah**. This implies that every Jew is actually associated with a particular letter in the Torah.

With this understanding, we can infer a deeper message conveyed by the passuk: **“אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני ה' אלקיכם”**. In the last Mishnah of Torah she’b’al peh, we learn (Oktzin 3, 12): **לא אמר רבי שמעון בן חלפתא. לא מצא הקב"ה כלי מחזיק ברכה לישראל אלא שלום, שנאמר ה' עוז לעמו יתן ה'.** **Rabbi Shimon bar Chalafta said: HKB”H did not find a vessel better suited for preserving berachah for Yisrael than shalom, as it states (Tehillim 29, 11): “Hashem will give**

His nation strength; Hashem will bless His nation with shalom."

We find a marvelous interpretation of this Mishnah in the incredible teachings of the Yismach Moshe (Ki Sisa). He focuses on the Tanna's language: **כלי מחזיק ברכה לישראל—a vessel for preserving berachah for Yisrael.** This implies that Yisrael possess a vessel containing berachah in all situations; however, for it to preserve the berachah, shalom must prevail among the people of Yisrael.

This requires further explanation. He explains in his own inimitable way that HKB"H exerts His influence in the world through the holy Torah. As the Mishnah states (Avos 3, 17): **"אם אין תורה אין קמח—if there is no Torah, there is no flour** (sustenance). Thus, the Torah functions as a vessel receiving the bounty from above. Now, a vessel must be free of holes and cracks in order to hold a liquid that is poured into it; otherwise, the liquid will leak out and only the tiny amount adhering to the sides of the vessel will remain.

In a manner of speaking, the same is true of the holy Torah; it is analogous to a vessel designed to receive the plentiful berachah from above. It must be whole, free of any holes or cracks; otherwise, it will be incapable of preserving the bounty within it. Then, unfortunately, the bounty will leak out to the external forces of evil—the "chitzonim"—who wait impatiently to steal Yisrael's bounty. Then, all that will remain for Yisrael is the residue adherent to the sides of the vessel.

Based on this analogy, the Yismach Moshe says that when the 600,000 neshamos of Yisrael are united, the 600,000 letters of the Torah associated with them unite to form a whole, intact vessel capable of holding and preserving within it the bountiful berachah provided to Yisrael from the heavens. If, chas v'shalom, the 600,000 neshamos of Yisrael lack unity, then there will also be a lack of unity and division among the 600,000 letters of the Torah. In this situation, the vessel of the Torah will be full of holes and cracks, and its bounty will leak out to "chitzonim," who are anxious to steal it from Yisrael.

This then is the message conveyed by the Tanna: **"HKB"H did not find a vessel better suited for preserving berachah for Yisrael than shalom."** When peace and harmony—"shalom"—prevails among the 600,000 neshamos of Yisrael, the vessel of the Torah consisting of 600,000 letters is whole and intact. It is a magnificent vessel that holds and preserves the berachah of plenty for Yisrael, **as it states: "Hashem will give His nation strength"**—namely, the Torah, which HKB"H uses to provide Yisrael with abundant good. There is a condition, however: **"Hashem will bless His nation with shalom"**—shalom is essential for the vessel to hold and preserve the berachah; otherwise, it will leak out of the vessel, and all that will remain for Yisrael is the scraps and residue.

HKB"H Utters a Berachah on the Torah that Corresponds to All the Neshamos of Yisrael

It is now fitting to introduce the fascinating comments of the Arvei Nachal (Ha'azinu 4) related to the Mishnah under discussion: **לא מצא הקב"ה כלי מחזיק ברכה לישראל אלא השלום.** שנאמר ה' עוז לעמו יתן ה' יברך את עמו בשלום." He refers to a teaching in the Yerushalmi (R.H. 1, 3): **"בנוהג שבעולם מלך בשר ודם גוזר גזירה, רצה מקיימה רצה אחרים מקיימים אותה, אבל הקב"ה אינו כן, אלא גוזר גזירה ומקיימה תחלה, מאי טעמא ושמרן את משמרתני אני ה', אני הוא ששימרתני מצוותיה."** HKB"H Himself, so to speak, observes all the mitzvos of the Torah. This is in stark contrast to human kings; they are capricious; they may or may not comply with their own edicts. Not so HKB"H; He observes His own edicts before requiring others to do so. What is the reason? Because it states (Vayikra 22, 9): **"They shall guard My safekeeping . . . I am Hashem"—I am He Who keeps the mitzvos of the Torah first.** Here is a loose translation of the sacred words of the Arvei Nachal:

It is important to understand that the kedushah of a sefer-Torah is immense. Its main significance is being a collection of 600,000 letters on a single parchment; and the berachah recited over it is superior to all of the Berachos, since a berachah for a mitzvah is only for a specific, particular mitzvah, whereas this berachah encompasses all of the mitzvos

of the Torah. For this reason, our blessed Rabbis stressed its importance by proclaiming that Yisrael were exiled from their land solely for failing to recite a berachah before studying Torah (B.M. 85b).

But if even a single letter is missing from a sefer-Torah, it is invalidated; it no longer possesses the same kedushah and it is not fit to recite a berachah over it. Even if they take a small piece of parchment, write the missing letter on it, and place it in the sefer-Torah, it will not help, because the essential kedushah of a sefer-Torah is the joining together of those 600,000 letters on a single parchment. For, those 600,000 letters are the entire eminent stature of kedushah.

Based on this, the Arvei Nachal says something incredible. Per halachah, it is only permissible to recite a berachah on the reading of the Torah, if it is complete with all of its letters. If it is missing even a single letter, it is prohibited to recite a berachah over it. Similarly, HKB"H blesses Yisrael, whose 600,000 base neshamos are associated with the 600,000 letters in the Torah. So, if shalom and unity are absent among the 600,000 neshamos of Yisrael, they resemble a sefer-Torah missing one or more letters. As such, a berachah cannot be recited over it. This then is the meaning of the statement: **"HKB"H did not find a vessel better suited for preserving berachah for Yisrael than shalom."** Because only when shalom exists among all 600,000 neshamos of Yisrael does HKB"H recite a berachah over them.

By combining what we have learned from the Yismach Moshe and the Arvei Nachal, we can shed some light on the message conveyed to us by HKB"H in parshas Nitzavim, which is always read on the Shabbas preceding Rosh HaShanah: **"אתם נצבים היום כולכם, כל איש ישראל, טפכם, לפני ה' אלקיכם, ראשיכם, שבטיכם, זקניכם, ושוטריכם, כל איש ישראל, טפכם, נשיכם, וגרך אשר בקרב מחניך, מחוטב עציך, עד שואב מימוך."**

Rosh HaShanah is alluded to by the term "היום". It is the Day of Judgment, on which all creatures pass before HKB"H like sheep. HKB"H, in His infinite compassion

and kindness, yearns to bless all 600,000 neshamos of Yisrael. Hence, it is worthwhile for all ten categories of Jews included in these 600,000 neshamos to unite as one man with one heart. This will allow HKB"H to recite a berachah over them as a whole, intact vessel having no cracks or defects. Thus, the berachah will endure and its bounty will be preserved.

The Fabulous Tikun of the 600,000 Letters of the Torah

With immense pleasure, we will now introduce an insight from the Ma'or Einayim (Emor). He writes that all of the avodah during the holidays of Tishrei—beginning with Rosh HaShanah, Yom HaKippurim, Chag HaSuccos, and concluding on Simchas Torah—are designed so that every Jew will rectify the letter in the Torah associated with his neshamah. Thus, when we reach Shemini Atzeres, which is Simchas Torah, all the letters of the Torah will have been rectified. We celebrate this accomplishment by rejoicing and dancing with the sifrei-Torah, and everyone is called up to the Torah on this festive day. Here is his illuminating insight in his own sacred words:

"כי כל חלקי נשמות ישראל הן מושרשין בתורה, כנודע שכל אחד יש לו אות בתורה, ובהתרחקו מן הבורא ברוך הוא נפסק חלקו משרוש התורה, ועל ידי תיקון ראש השנה ויום הכיפורים שב החלק של כל אחד מישראל אל התורה, ויש לו אז בחינת עליה אל התורה, שעל כן אחר יום הכיפורים, חג הסוכות שהוא צלא דמהימנותא, החופה ומגין על ישראל על ידי תיקון שהיה להם ביום הכיפורים.

ונקרא יום אחרון של חג 'שמחת תורה', שהוא שמחה לתורה עילאה, ששבו ועלו אצלה ונתקרכו כל חלקי שרשי נשמות ישראל ונתאחדו בה, כי כל אחד שב על ידי תיקון הזמן של המועדים להתורה שמשם שורש נשמתו, ועל כן המנהג שכל ישראל עולה לתורה ביום שמחת תורה, שבאמת אז עולין להתורה ברוחניות גם כן, שמקרבין שורש נשמתו וחלק אלקי שבהן להתורה שמשם שורש נשמתו כמבואר, כנודע שיש ס' רבוא אותיות לתורה כמספר שרשי נשמות ישראל".

All partial Jewish neshamos are rooted in the Torah. For, as it is known, everyone has his own letter in the Torah. If he strays away from the blessed Creator, his portion from the root of his neshamah is interrupted. By means of the tikun of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, the portion of every single Jew is restored in the Torah.

Then, he has a sort of "aliyah" to the Torah. For, after Yom HaKippurim, Chag HaSuccos is the "shade of emunah"—the chupah that protects Yisrael by means of the tikun afforded them on Yom HaKippurim.

The last day is called Simchas Torah, since it is a joyous occasion for the supreme Torah. For, all the partial root-neshamos of Yisrael returned and ascended to her; they drew near and united in her. For, every individual returned to the Torah—the root of his neshamah—by means of the tikun afforded by the period of the festivals. Therefore, the minhag is for every Jew to go up to the Torah on the day of Simchas torah. For, in reality, we also ascend to the Torah spiritually at that time, since we are drawing the root of our neshamah and the divine portion within us closer to the Torah, from where the root of one's neshamah comes, as explained. As we know, there are 600,000 letters in the Torah the same as the number of Jewish root neshamos.

Let us add a spicy tidbit to this idea. For this reason, it is the accepted Jewish custom for every individual to be called up to the Torah on Simchas Torah and recite

a berachah over it. Thus, we make a symbolic gesture below to motivate HKB"H to also recite His berachah over the 600,000 letters of the Torah and concomitantly over all the 600,000 Jewish neshamos associated with them that have achieved tikun.

This explains magnificently the statement in the Zohar hakadosh (Tzav 32a) that every Jew is invited to a private audience with HKB"H to receive Berachos from Him for the entire year. Usually, whoever sits alone with the king may request whatever he wants, and it will be given to him. Let us explain this in keeping with our current discussion. On the Yamim Nora'im and on Chag HaSuccos, we were able to rectify all 600,000 letters of the Torah, which are associated with all 600,000 Jewish neshamos. On account of an action below, we are privileged to sit with HKB"H, the Giver of the Torah. He also recites a berachah on the 600,000 letters of the Torah and all 600,000 neshamos of Yisrael intimately attached to them. In this manner, HKB"H fills and satisfies all the requests of our hearts for the good.



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