



THANK YOU HASHEM

For Shabbos Kodesh!



Parshas Nitzavim

HaMeor Shebah

A Short Burst of Relevance

וְאַתֶּם נִצְבִּים הַיּוֹם כְּלֶכֶם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם רִאשִׁיכֶם שְׂבָטֵיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם וְשֹׁטְרֵיכֶם כָּל אִישׁ...

You stand today, all of you, before Hashem your God - your leaders, your tribal heads, your elders, and officials. Your children, your wives... from wood chopper to water carrier...

AS IN EVERY society, Judaism has a social hierarchy. In the times of the Beis HaMikdash, there were clear differences between Kohanim, Levi'im, and Yisraeilim. When we had a king, it was he who sat atop the social pyramid. Today, our communities are headed by tzaddikim, rabbanim, askanim, and yarei Shamayim other leadership capacities who lead with love, care, and devotion. It is easy to make a distinction between those in distinguished positions of prestige and authority and, so to speak, "simple Jews" who are struggling to connect to Hashem by means of His Torah and mitzvos as they fight the battles of everyday life. But in truth, this is all only on a very external level. Commenting on Chazal's teaching that Yiftach Hagiladi was as great in his generation as Shmuel had been in his (Rosh Hashana 25b), the holy Ishbitzer says the most amazing thing. The tzaddik teaches that Chazal mean to teach us that Hashem's hierarchy

works differently than ours. To Him, it matters not how impressive or important someone appears on the outside - all that matters is if the person is fulfilling the purpose for which Hashem has sent him to the world. Although each member of Klal Yisrael has a different role to play and some of those roles may appear to be more elevated than others, as long as we are serving Hashem as best as we know how with the tools we have been given, Hashem is equally close with all of us and holds us all in the highest esteem. This, says the Ishbitzer, is the deeper meaning behind the opening verses of our parsha: "You stand today, all of you": every member of am Yisrael stands equally close to the Master of the world. "Before Hashem your God": If we are indeed trying our hardest to accomplish the specific mission Hashem has sent us for. "Your leaders, your tribal heads... from wood chopper to water carrier": It makes little difference how prestigious or lowly our individual roles in Hashem's Masterplan appear to be on the outside - to Hashem, all that matters is that we act with simplicity and truth, not trying to copy this or that tzaddik, but rather to grow into the best version of ourselves. This alone is what He most desires.

Parsha Roundup

A 60-second Review

- 👑 Moshe communicates the mitzvah of Bikkurim - upon entering the Holy Land, the first-ripened fruits must be brought to the Beis HaMikdash and one must express one's gratitude to Hashem.
- 👑 Parshas Nitzavim includes many fundamental principles of Judaism, elaborating on many mitzvos and teaches us that they are all accessible to us. We learn about the exiles which will come in the future, and how Hashem will save us from them and take us back to Eretz Yisroel.
- 👑 Klal Yisroel are told that they have the ability to choose between life and death and we get to choose based on how we act.

A Quick Mayseh

A Story to Warm the Heart

ONE FRIDAY AFTERNOON, as Rebbe Michel of Zlotchov was returning home from the mikvah, he suddenly requested a chair. Right there, in the middle of the street, the tzaddik sat down for several minutes before continuing on his way. No one could guess the reason behind his strange behavior.

That night at the tisch, the Zlotchover Maggid delivered a long Chassidic discourse in the manner of Rebbe Shneur Zalman, the first Rebbe of Lubavitch. The chassidim were surprised as Reb Michel had always conducted himself in the way Polisher Rebbes who would say only a few, terse words of Torah. Was it possible that the tzaddik had undergone some sort of change and begun adhering to the minhagim of Chabad?

The next day, Reb Michel returned to his former behavior during the Shabbat meal, relating words of Torah in his usual manner. The same held true at shalosh seudos as well. The chassidim were abuzz - what had caused Reb Michel to change his custom the previous night?

Some time later, Reb Michel explained what had happened. "I was walking home from the mikveh when I suddenly heard a maamar of Rebbe Shneur Zalman as it was being learned in Gan Eden. I immediately sat down so I could better concentrate and listen. The Torah I gave at the Friday night tisch was what I had just overheard in the celestial spheres."

The next time you are suddenly struck with heaven-sent inspiration, take a moment to tune in and actualize your feelings! You never know whose heavenly shiur is echoing within your heart... 👑

Tohameha

Tasting the Depth of Shabbos Kodesh

IN OUR COLUMN two weeks ago, parshas Ki Seitzei, we discussed the relationship between Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh. Here, the Chernovitzer Rav delves deeper into the spiritual bond these special days share. The Mekubalim teach that there are 12 permutations of the *Shem Havaya*. (Although its four letters should theoretically be permutable in 24 distinct ways, because the 2 *hei's* are identical, only 12 of the 24 permutations can be distinguished in our reality.) Each of these permutations manifest in one of the 12 months of the year. This is referenced in the fact that the word “**Chodesh**” is numerically equivalent to 12 times the *Shem Havaya* to which each *chodesh* corresponds. The tzaddik teaches that, as the Name associated with the *middah* of *Tiferes*, the *Shem Havaya* represents the perfect balance between the forces of *Chessed* and *Gevurah*. This ultimate synthesis is expressed in a leap-year, during which there are 13 months - the numerical value of “**Echad**”. This is the light of the world to come, the “*Ohr chadash*” that will be revealed - a light of unity emanating from the highest levels which binds the 12 permutations of the *Shem Havaya* together as one. The Chernovitzer Rav explains that, as a taste of the world to come, Shabbos contains this light as well. As we have learned, “**Shabbos**” is numerically equivalent to 27 times the *Shem Havaya* - 13 on one side, 13 on the other, and one *Shem Havaya* in the center for Shabbos itself which is referred to by the Zohar as “the name of *Kudsha Brich Hu*.” Just as the 12 permutations of the *Shem Havaya* hinted to in the word “**Chodesh**” manifest in the 12 months of the year, the 27 permutations (two times thirteen, plus one for Shabbos itself) hinted to in the word “**Shabbos**” manifest in the 27 hours of Shabbos. Therefore, each hour of Shabbos is bursting with the light of ultimate perfection and other-worldly illumination. 🕯

This section is adapted from the sefer “Sidduro Shel Shabbos” by R’ Chaim of Chernowitz zy”a (1760-1816)

P’nimiyus Ha’Halacha

The Inner Dimension of Jewish Law

THE GEMARA (*Horiyos* 12a) teaches that on Rosh Hashanah, a person should **see** gourds, fenugreek, leek, beets, and dates as a good *siman*, a good omen. The Gemara in *Kerisus* (6a) records the same statement with the text that a person should **eat** these fruits and vegetables as a good *siman*. *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 583:1) rules that a person should eat these foods on Rosh Hashana. The *Kaf HaChaim* (583:6) notes that if one can’t eat a certain food, he may just look at it and say the *Yehi Ratzon*. While many of the *poskim* write that the *minhag* is to eat *simanim* on both nights of Rosh Hashana (*Eliyahu Rabba* 583:1, *Machazik Bracha* 583:2, and *Halichos Olam* 2:227 among others) the *Bnei Yissaschar* 2:11 and *Eishel Avraham M’Butchech* 583 explain that the *minhag* of eating the *simanim* applies only on the first night of Rosh Hashana. Rav Shlomo Zalman Orbach (*Halichos Shlomo* 1:17) writes that one should make the “*HaEitz*” upon the dates first because they are from the seven species with which Eretz Yisrael was praised and they come before pomegranates on that list. *Rivevos Efraim* 8:558:3 writes that after making “*HaEitz*” on the dates, one may eat the apples prior to the pomegranates because the rules of precedence apply only regarding the *beracha*, not regarding when each food should be eaten. The *Magen Avraham* 583:2 quotes the *Maagalei Tzedek* as saying that one should say the *Yehi Ratzon* in between the *beracha* and eating. He explains that the *Yehi Ratzon* is a prerequisite for eating and thus does not constitute an interruption. The *Magen Avraham*, however, argues that the requirement to say the *Yehi Ratzon* is not so strong, and it is therefore preferable to say the *Yehi Ratzon* after taking a bite.

Rav Itamar Schwartz, author of *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, delves into the depth of this minhag by examining the concept of a *siman*, a sign. He writes that a *siman* is a symbol to the essence of something. When something isn’t openly revealed to our eyes,

it needs a *siman* so that we can know it exists. The *siman* of something is how we can become aware that something ethereal exists - it draws the Heavenly essence behind the matter into this world in such a way that we are able to see it.

The Acharonim dispute the meaning behind the *Yehi Ratzon* compositions we say by the *simanim*. While the *Avudraham* understands that these are *tefillos* said so we will merit a good judgment, the *Chochmas Shlomo* is of the opinion that it is not a *tefillah*, but rather an expression of our *bitachon* that we will merit a good judgment. Either way, the *simanim* represent something we cannot see here on this world. We are able to draw down Heavenly essence to this world through the *simanim*.

Rosh Hashanah is about both life and death, as the “Book of the Living” and the “Book of the Dead” are open on this exalted day. Chazal teach us that had Adam eaten from the Eitz HaChaim, there would be only life. However, when Adam ate from the Eitz HaDaas, death came to the world. From that moment on, Man was connected to death. Since that time, the essential life-force of humanity is concealed so we do not have access to the Source of Life. However, we are yet granted *simanim* that can awaken to us what the essence of life is.

This is the reason for the Gemara’s statement that the *simanim* should be both eaten and seen. The Torah tells us that Chavah **saw** the Eitz HaDaas and she **ate** from it. When we eat the *simanim* on Rosh Hashana and are transported through these lofty signs to the essence of life sourced in this day upon which Man was created, our **eating** and **seeing** the *simanim* rectifies the *cheit Eitz HaDaas*, allowing us to tap into the spirit of true and eternal life. *Kesivah v’chasimah tovah, and ah gut gebenchte yohr!* 🕯