

Cincinnati Torah מסיני

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Nitzavim-Rosh Hashana

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Write Your Own Ticket

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BERISH EDELMAN

It may sound trite to our ears by now, the idea worn thin by repetition, but I've got to start somewhere. Those who pursue happiness for its own sake will find anything but. A life lived in search of meaning and purpose is a much safer bet.

Responsibility is a facet of the larger idea of meaning. Shouldering a burden of responsibility is the surest path to living meaningfully. A person who faces outward and lives for something outside himself—be that spiritual or physical—will find himself on the path of goodness and light.

In the very beginning of this week's *parasha*, the *Kli Yakar* explains the order of the categories of people listed in the *pesukim* as in descending order of responsibility. The bond formed on *Har Grizim* and *Har Eival* was one of being accountable for one another, but not as a blanket rule. Instead, it is only to the degree to which a person is capable of influencing another person's actions that he is held responsible for them. If we each were individually responsible for every other member of *Klal Yisrael*, *lo shavkas chai l'chol berya!* (We wouldn't stand a chance!) That's not what we signed up for!

But the sins of the nation are laid at the feet of those to whom the nation listens, and who therefore have greater reach and power

to influence. And indeed, we find throughout the words of our sages that our leaders are judged first, come Rosh Hashanah. This, too, springs from the bond of responsibility that we share. Indeed, we find startling statements such as *nasi hador hu shakol kichol hador*. (The leader of the generation is as weighty as the entire generation.)

The Torah goes on to say, that the purpose of this *arvus*, of this bond of responsibility, is to establish us as a nation.

The conclusion is inescapable.

The *mehus*, the definition of a people, of a group of people, and most certainly that of a nation, is *achrayus*, responsibility. That each member of the group bears responsibility for the others is the glue that binds them. Without that accountability that one has for the other, they are just a motley collection of people, milling about.

Hashem gives us the ability to write our own ticket. If we step up and take on more responsibility, we thereby scale the ladder, mantled with greater meaning and purpose. The more responsibility, the more part of the nation we are.

As we stand on the cusp of a fresh new year, let us each take advantage of the life that we are given to step up and take responsibility for as much of *Klal Yisrael* as we can bear. Next to such an aspiration, mere happiness pales.

A *k'siva v'chasima tova* to all. 🕊

SCHEDULE FOR THE UPCOMING WEEK:

Selichos Sunday Erev R"H 6:55 am
Mincha Erev Rosh Hashana 2:00 pm
Selichos Tzom Gedalia 6:50 am
Mincha Tzom Gedalia 2:00 pm
Maariv Tzom Gedalia 7:40 pm
Selichos Aseres Y'mei T'shuva 6:50 am

A RIDDLE FOR YOU

What Hebrew words have no singular form?
(There are three.) 🕊

See reverse side for the answer

A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

It has become customary to fast on erev Rosh Hashanah (O.C. 581:2). In most communities the fast is only a half day or until after *Mincha Gedolah* (the earliest time to daven *Mincha*). Although *Mishnah Berurah* (581:16) writes that women also fast, this is not the custom in most places today. Many people, especially during their younger years, adopt this custom but find it difficult to maintain as they get older. A question that comes up often is if whether a person who has fasted in the past is required to continue to do so every year.

The process for giving up fasting on erev Rosh Hashanah depends on how the custom was adopted originally. There are three possible cases:

- If the custom was accepted initially as a lifelong commitment, one must be *matir neder* (annul his vow).
- If the custom was accepted initially on a year-by-year basis, no *hatoras nedorim* (annulment) is required.
- If the custom was accepted initially without specifying the length of the commitment, then one follows the general principle that any proper custom which was accepted without a *b'li neder* (without a vow) stipulation automatically becomes a *neder* and may not be dropped without *hatoras nedorim*.

Note that this *halachic* problem is not unique to the custom of fasting on erev Rosh Hashanah. Any proper custom or *mitzvah*, once accepted and followed, may not be dropped without undergoing *hatoras nedorim*. People who adopt even "simple" customs in which they are otherwise not obligated, like reciting *Tehillim* daily or studying the *Daf Yomi*, without making the *b'li neder* stipulation require *hatoras nedorim* should they decide to discontinue their practice.

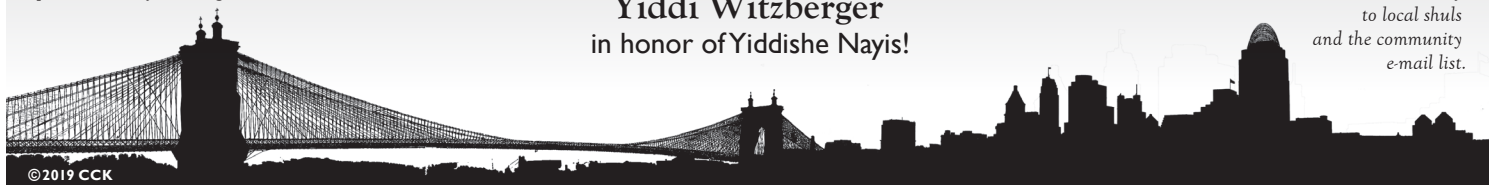
An exception to this rule (brought in Y.D. 214:1; see *Igros Moshe* Y.D. 1:47) is when one undertakes a practice which he thinks

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A HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

CONTINUED

is obligatory, but later finds out that it is not. In that case, he may drop his practice without *hatoras nedorim*. For instance, a person who ate *cholov Yisroel* only because he thought it was absolutely required or because that is what the local Jewish grocery sold, but later found out that this is not the case, may discontinue his practice without being *matir neder*.

[There are those who want to suggest that the specific text of *mesiras hamodo'ah* given at the end of *hatoras nedorim* helps in this situation (*Maharsham, Salmas Chaim*, and *Minchas Shlomo* 141:91:20); however, many disagree and feel that it should not be relied upon (see R' S Kammentzky, *ibid* p 60)].


A few additional points regarding specifically the erev Rosh Hashanah fast:

- When not feeling well, one is exempted from this fast.
- All guests at a *bris milah* can partake in the *seudas mitzvah* (festive meal) (R' S Kammenetzky, *Kovetz Halochos* p 47 note 8).
- One can make a *siyum mesechta* (completion of a unit of study) and eat a meal afterwards.
- If one finds that fasting will diminish or lower the quality of his regular Torah learning, he is better off eating and learning more (R' S Kammenetzky, *ibid*, extrapolated from the *Chayei Adam*). 

GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

One day the Bobover Rebbe related a story to some of his *chassidim*. Rivka had extra time on her hands. She had already been married for many years and was not blessed with children. She and her husband had been to *tzadikim* for blessings and to doctors for medical advice, and had prayed long and hard, but they

were still waiting. So, with her extra time, Rivka began to visit Jewish patients at Maimonides hospital in New York and cheered up many a patient. One day as Rivka walked down a hallway, she overheard a groan escape from a room she had just passed by. She glanced inside and saw an elderly Jewish woman lying in the bed. Gathering her courage, Rivka went inside and sat down next to her. The woman looked away, not interested in speaking to anyone. Rivka persisted in attempting to start a conversation and finally the woman began to answer. She was alone. She had no one left in her family. No one ever came to visit her. Satisfied that she had at least started something, she told the woman she would be back the next day to visit again. The next day came, and by the time she left she had even gotten the woman

to crack a smile. The visits continued and the two women grew very close. Unfortunately, the woman's health was not improving with her mood, and the day came when she was laboring for breath and they both knew her end was near. The elderly woman looked at Rivka and said, "I have nothing to repay your kindness to me with. I have not a penny to my name. Neither do I have family to instruct to repay your kindness. I will tell you though, that when I go before Hashem in heaven, I will ask that He grant you a child." Turning to his *chassidim* with a smile, the Bobover Rebbe concluded, "And today I was the *sandek* at the *bris* of Rivka's new baby boy!" 


GLIMPSES OF THE KOLLEL



BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

The first elementary school outside of New York was the Hebrew Parochial School of Baltimore, which opened in 1917. The visionary chief rabbi of Baltimore, Rabbi Avraham Nachman Schwartz, founded the school with only six students in an apartment. Rabbi Schwartz spent much time convincing parents of the importance of a Jewish education that went beyond what was taught at the traditional after-school Talmud Torah. In 1933, Rabbi Schwartz renamed the school Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim - Talmudical Academy (TA) after the recently deceased Rabbi Yisroel Meir Kagan, who was known as the *Chofetz Chaim*. TA outgrew several different facilities before moving into its current location with 450 students in 1968. Upon outgrowing the facilities at their current location, the school recently underwent a tremendous renovation project to accommodate its more than 1,000 students. TA added a high school program in 1943, and among the high school's first graduates in 1947 was the current Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Yisroel of Baltimore, Rabbi Aharon Feldman. (In that class was also this author's grandfather-in-law, Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Siegel.) 

SOURCE: Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim Talmudical Academy. Website. Talmudicalacademy.org.

RIDDLE ANSWER

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