

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Sing, Sing *Your* Song

RABBI
TZION
ZIV



Light, upbeat, and meaningful may be the goals of a Torah Micinci article, but as we stare down the last Shabbat of our year, there's a heaviness. And frankly? It's palpable. Like it or not—Rosh Hashana is officially a week away, and after a couple of blinks, *Taf Shin Pei Vav*, the year 5786 since creation, has flown by.

The holy Shelah HaKadosh writes: *Lichuot ihm hazman*—live with the times, meaning: Our weekly *parasha* provides direct guidance for whatever season of life we find ourselves within. Therefore, given the weight, and its aforementioned palpability, it's fair to ask: Why are we ending our year with these two *parshiot*?

Nitzavim begins as a *parasha* of the *rabim*, the collective: *Atem nitzavim hayom, kulchem lifnei Hashem Elokeichem*—all of you are standing today before Hashem. The

language focuses on the nation as a whole. Yet immediately after, the verse shifts to *pratim*, to individuals: “*zikneichem*” (elders), “*shotreichem*” (officers), “*nisheichem*” (wives), down to the chopper of wood.

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh explains this shift: *Shekol echad yitchayeiv kifi mah sheyeish byado*—every single individual is held responsible according to each one's unique ability. We all have a *shoresh haneshama*; our souls are rooted in a mission that only we can fulfill. As Rebbe Nachman teaches, the day you were born is the day Hashem decided the universe could no longer exist without you. We are thus judged on whether or not we have fulfilled our unique mission.

However, when we consider our year, truly looking inward, it's hard not to sigh. Looking back at our failures and missteps, we can easily feel unworthy and fall into despair. We could ask, as the *parasha* writes: “Is it not because my G-d is not in my midst that these evils have come upon me?” We trick ourselves into believing that if we were only like someone else—the better learner, that someone who has everything going for

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI DOVID SPETNER

Q. In the *mitzva* of *hakhel* we are commanded to attend, men, women and children. Rashi tells us that the purpose of bringing the children was to give reward to those who bring them. If that's so, why couldn't the Torah just command us to carry stones to give us reward?

A. Rav Yitzchok Hutner asks this very question. He reinforces it by pointing out that if there is no inherent purpose in the children being there, then there can be no purpose in bringing them.

He writes that the answer lies in our properly understanding the purpose of the entire *hakhel* event. He suggests that *hakhel* is designed to be a recreation of our accepting the Torah at Sinai. He points out that the term *hakhel* is used to describe receiving the Torah at Sinai when the Torah (*Devarim* 9:10) recalls it as *Yom Hakahal*. The concept of *kahal* requires the entire body of the Jewish people to be present. At Sinai this was particularly critical since *Chazal* understand that every Jew was undergoing conversion during the receiving of the Torah. Just as a child convert today must be present when undergoing conversion, so it was at Sinai. As such, *hakhel*, too, needed to recreate the very same

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

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scenario. Therefore children too needed to be present. Rav Hutner understands that is what “reward to those who bring them” means – to give the adults the ability to relive the revelation at Sinai. 🕊

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing parasha@cincynkollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A PARASHA THOUGHT

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him or her, that Rebbetzin who hosts for 18 and all her kids are somehow clean, in matching outfits!—if I were only more like them, then I would be complete. We feel the pressure to copy them, and we put our *nefesh*, that which makes us who we are, *btzar*. We constrict who we were created to be.

So the Almighty, in His infinite kindness, created the cure for the end-of-year blues.

Hashem commands us: *Kitvu lechem*

et hashira hazot—write for yourselves this song, the commandment for every individual to write a Sefer Torah. Hashem declares, *Ki yadati et yitzro*—I know their inclination. Hashem created us as flesh and blood; He, even more than we, knows our struggles. He foresaw we would make mistakes. The Torah was never given to flawless angels, and Hashem never expected us to be like them.

The only way to overcome our negative voice of doubt—what Rav Hillel Shepard, *shlit”a*, would call the *Yetzer Harah* Sirius XM channel streaming live straight to you—the only way to turn it off and return to our source, is through *hashira hazot*, our holy Torah.

The holy Berdichiver Rav teaches that because Hashem is infinite, physical beings cannot connect directly to Him except through the spiritual letters of Torah and *tefillah*.

Through authentic exposure to the blinding light of Torah, *the ohr*, we reveal the *toiv* of Hashem. Namely, I am perfect, and even more, I, even with all my flaws and failures, am loved. I am needed.

As my Rebbe, HaRav Shmuel Zucker, *shlit”a*, explains: *Nitzavim* means standing firm and unyielding. Even if popular opinion or our own self-doubt pushes back, we must stand unwavering in our unique purpose. Sing *your* song, and sing proudly, embracing the uniqueness Hashem placed within you. Build on your own strengths, never trying to be anyone else.

As we step into the New Year, we don’t need to be crushed by our history. By grabbing hold of our beloved Torah, we lift ourselves above the material world, above our past, above all mistakes. We march towards our future, united, yet still retaining our individuality.

By singing our individual song of Torah, we ensure that we are all active partners in bringing the future, the one we’re all waiting for: crowning Hashem as King of all kings, in Jerusalem with our Temple.

It should be immediately if not sooner, it should be a sweet new year, and it should be a Shabbat Shalom. Good Shabbat, and a *Shana Tova uMetuka!* 🕊

TRIVIA

RABBI GAVI KADISH

The *Shulchan Aruch paskens* that one should omit the phrase “*moadim lisimcha, chagim uzamanim lisason*” or “holidays for happiness...” in *tefillah* on Rosh Hashana. Does the elimination of that phrase seem to indicate that the regular *mitzva* of *simchas yom tov* does not apply on Rosh Hashana?

The Magen Avraham (Intro to *siman* 597) quotes the Magid Mayesharim that one should not eat meat or drink wine on Rosh Hashana. This would seem to indicate that the proverbial *mitzva* of *simcha* on *yom tov* which involves eating meat and drinking wine on *yom tov* would not apply on Rosh Hashana. The *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* (529:6) seems to clearly state that the classical *mitzva* of *simchas yom tov* is suspended on Rosh Hashana. However, the *Shulchan Aruch* (597:1) clearly says that one “eats, drinks, and is happy” on Rosh Hashana. The *Mishna Berura* elaborates that even though Rosh Hashana is a *Yom HaDin*, or day of judgement, the *mitzva* of “*visamchta bichagecha*” – that one should be happy on *yom tov* – is still relevant, and cites a verse in *Nechemia* to support this idea. Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (Kovetz *Halachos* 7:3:4) clarifies that lest one think the *mitzva* of *simcha* which applies on Rosh Hashana is watered down version, the Rambam dispels such a notion, and obligation is in full force (*Hilchos Yom Tov, perek 6 halacha* 17-18; see *Shagas Aryeh* as well *siman* 102). In light of the discussion above, how does one understand the *Shulchan Aruch’s* ruling that we don’t say “*moadim lisimcha*” during davening on Rosh Hashana if the *mitzva* of *simcha* clearly applies to Rosh Hashana?! In other words, how do we balance on the one hand it being a happy day, and on the other hand it being a day of judgment with a certain heaviness? Perhaps, the physical actions of *simcha* such as meat, wine, jewelry for women, and nuts (candy) for children are intended to engender a certain connection, meaning, specialness, and “excitement” for the *yom tov* and those actions engendering *simcha* are present in their unadulterated form; yet, the overall aura of happiness of the day is tapered by a certain seriousness being that it is a day of judgement. Another related idea is that it’s possible that we can simultaneously hold two contradictory emotions in our heart and mind and tap into both. Much ink has been spilled over this topic. Any answers of how to approach the dichotomy of Rosh Hashana are encouraged... Good Shabbos! *K’siva v’chasima tova!* 🕊