



Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 72

**Nitzavim – Rosh Hashanah** | Preparing for Rosh Hashanah



# 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**

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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### Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets

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## Parashat Nitzavim - Rosh Hashanah

### If I Knew You Like I Do Now

**HaRav** Saadia Gaon lived more than 1000 years ago. He was a very wise and great sage with many disciples.

**One** day, in a field near the home of HaRav Saadia, one of his disciples walked by and saw the Rav sobbing intensely. He ran up to him and asked what was wrong.

**Rav** Saadia answered him, "Every day, I do teshuva and ask Hashem to forgive my shortcomings."

**"What** shortcomings does the Rav have?" the disciple asked.

**The** Rav replied, "A while ago, I decided that the honor I was receiving from those around me was affecting my *avodat Hashem*, so I decided to go into exile.

**One** night, I rested in a small inn run by a simple Jew. He was very kind to me the entire time that I was there. The following

day, we said our goodbyes, and I continued to the next town.

**A** few hours later, one of my disciples came looking for me, stopped at the inn, and asked the owner if he had seen me. The owner replied, "HaRav Saadia Gaon? What would the Rav be doing in my inn? I'm sorry, but he wasn't here."

**But** when my disciple explained to him how I decided to go into exile and disguised myself with worn-out garments, the simple Jew yelled, "HaRav Saadia was here! No!" He quickly got into his wagon and chased after me.

**Soon**, he caught up to me and fell at my feet, crying, "HaRav Saadia, I didn't know it was you. Please forgive me!"

**I** stood him up and said, "You were very welcoming and kind to me. You have nothing to apologize for."

**The** inn owner replied, "No. If I would've only known that it

**Parashat Nitzavim - Rosh Hashanah - Nitzavim**

was you, HaRav, I would have served you very differently !”

**Since** then, I do teshuva every day crying to Hashem, “If I would’ve only known you yesterday as I know you now, Hashem, how differently would I have served you !”

**This** is a very important lesson in *avodat Hashem*.

**Before** we enter the holy day of Rosh Hashanah, let’s contemplate on who our King is, whom we are serving, and adequately prepare ourselves for the Day of Judgment.

**Nitzavim**

**Parashat** Nitzavim is the first of four parashot that Moshe Rabbeinu gave over on the day of his death.<sup>1</sup>

**Rabbi** Itzchak HaLevi, one of the Baalei HaTosefot from about 1,000 years ago, writes<sup>2</sup> that Moshe Rabbeinu gathered Am Israel and taught them the secrets of the great day of Rosh Hashanah. On this day, Hashem sits on the throne of judgment and judges the whole world. Whatever happens throughout the entire year is decreed on this day.

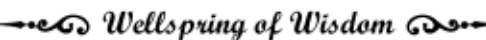
**In** addition, he revealed to them that all of the mitzvot that they had done throughout the past year ascend and stand before Hashem, and He examines them.

**Therefore**, before Rosh Hashanah, we do teshuva so that we will enter clean and pure for the Day of Judgment. Accordingly, *chazal* amended that parashat Nitzavim be read every year on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah since it deals with awakening to teshuva and improving our deeds before the Day of Judgment.<sup>3</sup>

**Write Us in The Book of Life**

**The** holy day of Rosh Hashanah is the great Day of

Judgment, in which it’s decreed on every person every little detail that



1. Nitzavim, Vayelech, Haazinu, and V’Zot HaBerachah - Rashi (Devarim 29:9).

2. Paaneach Raza (Devarim 30:19).

3. Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 428:4).

will occur with them throughout the next year, in all areas of life.

**But** the most important judgment on this day is life itself.

**The** Gemara<sup>4</sup> says that three books are opened on Rosh Hashanah...

**One** of the completely wicked, one of the completely righteous, and one of *Benoniim*, whose good and bad deeds are equally balanced.

**Complete** tzaddikim are immediately written and sealed for life.

**The** completely wicked are immediately written and sealed for death.

**Benoniim** are left with their judgment suspended from Rosh Hashanah until Yom Kippur. If they merit (through the fulfillment of mitzvot during this period), they are written for life. If they don't merit, they are written for death.

**In** the special additions that the *Geonim* added to the *Amidah* prayer

of the Ten Days of Repentance from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur, the main emphasis is on the request for life itself, "Remember us for **life**, King Who desires **life**, and inscribe us in the Book of **Life**, for Your sake, Living G-d. Who is like You merciful Father, Who remembers His creatures for **life**, in His mercy."

**We** also request quality of life...

**"Inscribe** for a good life all the children of Your covenant. In the book of life, blessing, peace, and abundance may we be remembered and inscribed before You."

**However**, this is only supplementary to life itself.

**While** in years past, many people took life for granted and it may have seemed that all they had to pray for was quality of life. That isn't the case today. As the years go by and we approach our final redemption, we see with our own eyes how much suffering accompanies this process. The feeling and understanding that

we truly have nothing to request but life, and that the rest is trivial, is strengthened in our hearts every day that goes by.

**Anyone** who's lucky and received the gift of life for another day, and certainly another week or month or year, even if money is tight, health is poor, peace in the home is shaky, the children are difficult, there's no reason for them not to be happy !

**We** have to thank Hashem day and night for this gift !

**This** is what the great Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz zt"l had to say on this topic...<sup>5</sup>

**After** the kindness that we receive from Hashem, life itself, how can we complain at all about other things that happen to us ? For example, someone that won the lottery. The same exact moment that they found out that they won, a vase fell and shattered to pieces. Did they feel the slightest sorrow during their great joy ?! The happiness they received at that

moment completely nullified all the trivial feelings of sorrow from the broken vase. So too, we should feel the never-ending love and kindness of Hashem, who gives us life. Our joy and happiness should be immeasurable, to the point that we simply don't feel any distress or deficiency in our lives.

**As** long as we live, even if we go through many difficulties, we should stay happy and trust in Hashem, for Hashem can instantly change our entire life for the better. Exactly for this reason, we need to pray that Hashem give us the gift of life.

**Let's** be real. For us, the quality of life is almost as important as life itself. There's no way we'll pray for life without adding a prayer for the quality of life. Thus, we should request that our lives be full of spiritual meaning and true *avodat Hashem*, for only then does every hour of life in this world have value. If we utilize the time<sup>6</sup> given to us for Torah, mitzvot, and acts of kindness, even though there may

be a lot of work hard that comes with it, it's worth more than the next world. As *chazal* say, "One hour of teshuva and good deeds in this world is more precious than all of the world to come."

**To** explain in more simple terms...

**There** was once a poor gardener who worked hard just to earn enough for some bread. He would get up early and go to

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*~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

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**6. A** professor once gave a lecture to his class using a large empty jar. He filled the jar with large rocks and asked his students if the jar was full.

**The** students replied, "Yes!"

**He** responded, "Wrong."

**He** added gravel to the jar and then asked yet again, "Now, is the jar full?"

**The** students answered confidently, "Yes! Now the jar is full."

**The** professor replied, "Wrong again."

**He** poured sand into the jar and asked once more, "Is the jar full?"

**The** students answered, "Now the jar is truly full."

**The** professor asked his student, "What lesson do we learn from this experiment?"

**One** of the students replied, "We learn that as much as it seems to us that our schedule is packed, if we really make an effort, we can always add more tasks."

**With** a smirk on his face, the professor responded, "The lesson we learn from

this experiment is that if we don't first put the big rocks in the jar, we'll never be able to put them in later on..."

A deep silence filled the room. Everyone present tried to grasp the profound meaning of the professors' words.

**The** professor looked at his students and said, "What do the big rocks represent in your life? Your health? Your family? Your friends...?"

**What we must remember is that it's extremely important to place the big rocks in our lives in the jar first. If priority is given to the little things (gravel and sand), life will be filled with the little things, and not enough of our precious time will be left to achieve the things that really matter."**

**If** we first and foremost value the things related to why we were sent to this world, such as Torah and mitzvot, consequently, all the small things such as acquiring wealth, fame, etc., will become insignificant, and therefore we'll have more time to spend on the things that really matter in life...

work, where he would hoe, plant, and water the plants, all while the scorching sun beat down on his head. At the end of the day, he would go home exhausted with only a meager sum in his pocket.

**One** day, the king went for a walk and saw the poor gardener worn out from his work as a river of sweat flowed down his forehead. The king pitied the man and suggested that he work in his palace, and even offered to pay him a very respectable salary. The man was ecstatic and thanked the king. He returned home overjoyed and informed his wife that Hashem had noticed their poverty and pain, and that from now on, they could live without any problems.

**The** next day, the poor man entered the king's palace. He wasn't required to change into his work clothes. Instead, the king placed him in a spacious hall with no trees or flowers and told him to act as if he were hoeing, watering, etc. At the end of the day, he would come to the king and receive his salary.

**The** poor man completed his "work" as instructed day after day, but not long after, he went to the king, apologized, and stated that he wished to resign from his job at the palace and return to his old job.

**The** king didn't understand and asked him, "Here in the palace, you're not under the hot sun, you don't have to work hard, your clothes don't get dirty, and most of all, your salary has been multiplied. Why in the world would you want to resign from your work in the palace and return to your old job?!"

**The** poor gardener explained, "At my old job, I would work very hard, I got bruised up, my hands were blistered and even bled, and the sun beat down on me, but after all, at the end of the day, I would see the fruit of my labor, a beautiful garden, full of colorful trees and flowers. Seeing them would make me feel fulfilled and made me forget all my sorrows. But here, in the palace, I don't feel fulfilled. There's no value to my work. I don't work to the same extent, and therefore I don't see



any fruit from my labor. All in all, I don't see any point in my work.”<sup>7</sup>

**The** moral is self-evident...

**Since** on Rosh Hashanah, the books of life and death are

opened before Hashem, and the entire world is judged, it's vital that we prepare ourselves.

**Let's** start with the last night of the year...

### The Last Night

**The** 29th of Elul is the last day of the year. When we do teshuva and pray on this day, we have the ability to do a *tikkun* (correction) for the entire past year. Therefore, when we come to pray *Arvit*, we should have in mind that this is the last *Arvit* of the year, and even more so should we approach it seriously.

**After** the *tefillah*, begins the *avodah* of the last night of the year...

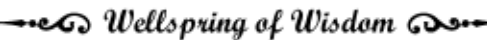
**Rabbi** Moshe Teitelbaum writes<sup>8</sup> that on this night, we should examine our deeds, do teshuva, and resolve not to sin again. We should cry and ask forgiveness from Hashem for everything that deep down in our hearts we know was wrong and resolve to fix what needs fixing.

Whether between us and Hashem or us and those around us.

**On** this night, tzaddikim conduct themselves by staying up the entire night, or at least from midnight until the morning, secluding themselves, speaking to Hashem, asking and begging Him to enlighten their eyes to let them understand what their *tikkun* is, what they need to fix and improve on...

**Even** someone who is far from this level should at least try to spend a few minutes alone, without a cellphone, without any distractions, and contemplate on the past year...

**One** of the things that helps someone come out of the



7. Imrei Noam (Rosh Hashanah, Maamar 3).

8. Yismach Moshe (Parashat Nitzavim).

judgment innocent is if they see in heaven that they truly prepared for it beforehand and entered the day of judgment seriously and

with a surrendered heart. Even if they did all the sins in the world, Hashem forgives them.

**Then** comes dawn...

### **Annulling Vows**

**At** dawn, you should go to the Beit Knesset to say *selichot* and pray to Hashem, the last *Shacharit* of the year, with emotion and passion.

**Immediately** after *Shacharit* on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, it's customary to do *Hatarat Nedarim* (Annulment of Vows).

**On** this, HaRav Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l said the following...<sup>9</sup>

**It's** said, "This is the word that Hashem has commanded. If a man makes a vow to Hashem or makes an oath to forbid to himself something which is permitted, he shall not profane his word. He shall do all that he said." (Bamidbar 30:2-3).

**That** is, the Torah warns that whoever vows or takes an oath to do something shall not desecrate

their words by thinking of them as trivial or of no importance. Rather whatever comes out of their mouth, they shall hasten to fulfill.

**When** someone vows to do something and delays its fulfillment, a prosecutor is created in heaven that constantly testifies against them and causes them much harm in all areas of life. Even if this person has many merits, learns Torah, etc., all this isn't enough to protect them from the accusation of delaying in fulfilling their vow.

**This** is seen with Yaakov Avinu when he fled from Esav to Charan...

**On** his way there, he vowed to Hashem, "If Elokim will be with me, and guards me on this path that I am going, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and if I return in peace to my father's house,

and Hashem will be my Elokim, then this stone which I have set as a monument will become a House of Elokim, and of all that You give me, I will surely give a tenth to You”  
(Bereshit 28:20-22).

**But**, after Hashem gave Yaakov vast wealth, Yaakov Avinu forgot to keep his vow and give *maaser*, which in turn caused great suffering to come upon him, as is stated in Midrash Tanchuma...<sup>10</sup>

**At** first, Hashem brought upon him Esav and 400 soldiers ready to kill him. In order to save his life, Yaakov had to give Esav a vast amount of his wealth.

**After** still not fulfilling his vow, Hashem brought upon him the guardian angel of Esav, who wrestled with him all night until finally wounding his leg.

**After** still not realizing his mistake, Hashem brought upon him the anguish of his daughter Dina, who was taken and tortured by Shechem ben Chamor.

**After** all this, he still didn't awaken to fulfill his vow. Thus, Hashem punished him with the death of his wife, Rachel.

**Hashem** then said, “How long shall this tzaddik continue to be punished without realizing his sin? I will have to tell him...”

**Hashem** revealed Himself to Yaakov Avinu and said, “These sufferings have befallen you only because you have not fulfilled your vow. If you do not wish to experience other afflictions, Arise, go up to Bet El, settle there, and erect an altar at the very place you made your vow.”

**Despite** the great merits of Yaakov Avinu, nothing helped him after he delayed his vow...

**From** here, we learn how much caution we need to take when making a vow. If you vowed *tzedakah* to the Beit Knesset when you went up to the Torah on Shabbat or Yom Tov, etc., hurry to pay the amount vowed immediately

after Shabbat or Yom Tov, don't even delay it even another day.

**For** this reason, we have the custom of doing a public *Hatarat Nedarim* on the eve of Rosh

Hashanah and Yom Kippur, for our rabbis knew that if, heaven forbid, someone forgot to fulfill their vow, this may provoke great accusations against them...

## Pray For Me

**Rabbi** Moshe Isserles, the *Rama*, writes<sup>11</sup> that it's been a great custom for many generations to pray at *Kivrei Tzaddikim* (the graves of the righteous) on the eve of Rosh Hashanah.

**When** going to the graves of *tzaddikim*, you should ask the *tzaddik* to go before Hashem and arouse mercy on you. Before praying on the *kever*, you should set aside *zedakah* and light a

candle for the elevation of the soul of the *tzaddik*,<sup>12</sup> then place your

left hand on the grave and say,  
 "יְהִי רְצוֹן שְׁתֵּהא מְנוּחָתוֹ שֶׁל פְּלוֹנִי פֹה  
 בְּכַבוֹד וְזִכְרוֹתוֹ יִצְמַד לִי"

(May it be His will that the rest of (person's name) here be with honor and his merit stand for me).<sup>13</sup>

**It** is also important to arrive at the *Kivrei Tzaddikim* after you have already cleaned yourself from all impurity and done complete

## Wellspring of Wisdom

**11.** Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 581:4)

**12. If** you want your prayer to be received at the *kever* of the *tzaddik*, you should set aside *zedakah* for the needy or for Torah institutions and say, "I set aside this money for the elevation of the soul of the *tzaddik* so and so."

**From** this *zedakah*, an angel of *chesed* is created, and it ascends before Hashem, which gives Him great *nachat* (delight). This provides the *tzaddik* with more merit, which in turn elevates him

to higher worlds, and causes him great joy. The *tzaddik* asks, "Who caused me this *nachat*?" They answer him, "So and so, who gave *zedakah* in your honor." The *tzaddik* then replies, "If so, whatever they need, I'll help them."

**What's** important is not the amount given, but rather it's the intention of the heart that truly matters. Hashem desires our hearts...

**13.** Piskei T'shuvot (Vol. 8, p. 196).

**Parashat Nitzavim - Rosh Hashanah - Chesed is Measured at Home !**

teshuva so that your prayers may ascend and be a worthy vessel to receive the blessing of the tzaddikim. It's also recommended to arrive before midday, which is a greater time of *Et Ratzon* (a time of heavenly mercy) than later in the day.

**Also**, before you get home, head over to the barber...

**It's** a good custom to get a haircut on the eve of Rosh Hashanah because the hair of the

head is *din*, so it's a *siman tov* (favorable sign) to get rid of the *dinim* on your head. It's good to get the haircut before midday as well.<sup>14</sup> But if you know that the barber is going to be packed on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, and it will cause stress, arguments, etc., it's fine to get a haircut a day or two before...

**But** remember, keeping *shalom* with others, especially family, is greater than all the customs !

**Chesed is Measured at Home !**



**On** the eve of Rosh Hashanah, as we prepare for judgment, we should try to accumulate as many merits as possible, and there's no greater merit for someone married than to honor their spouse...

**Hashem** commands us, "From your own flesh you shall not hide" (Yeshayah 58:7). When you decide to help everyone, remember to also help those that are truly close to

you... Don't forget about your wife and children. *Chesed* is measured by your behavior toward *them* specifically !

**Rabbi** Chaim Vital *zt"l* writes<sup>15</sup> that the main accusation in heaven against man is on how he behaved at home with his wife !

**We** come before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah with a long list of *chesed*. Hospitality with people,

—  *Wellspring of Wisdom*  —

14. Ben Ish Chai - Year 1 (Nitzavim, 3).

15. Shaar HaYichudim (Ch. 5).

**He** also adds, "Anyone who is *Makpid* (stern) even for a good reason

cannot achieve attainment, and Eliyahu HaNavi does not come to one who is *Makpid*. Also, **one should be most careful about being stern with his wife, even if there's a good reason**, and

helping others at work, donations made to good causes, a listening ear for those in distress...

**But** the truth is, in heaven, they look for whether your wife appears first on that list or not. If so, then you are truly a man of *chesed* and indeed care about others. But if your wife isn't first, then it's not *chesed* that interests you, rather honor, pride, and for people to say, "What a tzaddik..."

**Rabbi** Nachum Diamant shlita told us the following story and added that if he hadn't taken part in the matter, it would've been hard for him to believe that it was true...

**A** woman had called me many times to cry over her misfortune... Her husband is one of the most prominent philanthropists and has an outstanding reputation.

Everywhere she goes, people admire her saying, "What, your so and so's wife? What a privilege ! He's such a tzaddik !"

**"They're** full of praises," the woman says, "but I, when hearing them, feel betrayed. He does *chesed* with the whole world, other than with me. I have no husband, and my children have no father..."



**One** day, she called me and immediately burst into tears. She cried and cried, and I tried to calm her down, but she was having difficulty relaxing. After quite a while, she was finally able to speak a couple of words...

"I can't continue any longer !"

**What** happened this time ?

**She** was nine months pregnant, and she genuinely had to rest before birth. Of course, though, her

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 *Wellspring of Wisdom* 

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should distance themselves from anger and sternness as much as possible.

**In** *Shaar HaMitzvot* (Parashat Ekev), he writes...

**I** observed that my teacher, the Arizal, would not honor himself with

excessively pleasant clothes, nor would he eat much at all, **but when it came to his wife's clothes, he was very careful to honor her with very beautiful and pleasant clothing and would grant her every desire, even if he couldn't afford it.**

husband couldn't help, for he was busy helping others. Nothing new...

**This** time she decided, unlike in the past, that she didn't care. She had no strength for arguments. "He'll go deal with his "*chesed*," and I'll manage somehow."

**Her** strength was diminishing, and even though she thought she would be able to handle things on her own, she no longer could and decided to ask for his help.

**Her** request was for him to return home at two o'clock in the afternoon, pick up the children, and feed them. Her husband answered, "No problem."

**She** was slightly shocked and even more relieved. She finally saw that he and his *chesed* had some sort of boundaries...

**At** ten to two, he picked up the phone, called her, and said, "I'm sorry, I won't make it. There's nothing I can do...."

**Then** he said a sentence, which tore his wife's heart out, "There's a woman here who

needs to rest before birth, and there's no one to help her..."

**If** any of you were to ask that same man, "Is your wife not as important as the woman you helped? Are your children less important than her children?" He would answer something along the lines of, "Nonsense, my wife is just playing! She's capable of taking care of the children!"

**He** doesn't realize his foolishness. The very fact of him volunteering to help the whole world while neglecting his family testifies that he isn't a man of *chesed* at all. He is a man who pursues honor, who seeks only praise from others, and doesn't truly cling to the *Middot* of Hashem! All he thinks about is himself!

**In** order to arrive at Rosh Hashanah full of merits, the man should go home, help his wife with preparations for the *Chag*, and shower her with heart-melting compliments.

**Of** course, the wife should obviously honor her husband and treat him with respect as well. Lots of smiles, happiness, and

love. This way, they both enter Rosh Hashanah on the right foot

and merit many more good years together.

## **Mikveh**

**It's** a mitzvah for every Jew to immerse in a mikveh of 40 *seah* on the eve of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur for additional *taharah* (purity).<sup>16</sup> A mikveh has the power to completely change a Jew. To bring them to greater purity and complete teshuva. As the holy Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld would say, "If immersion in a mikveh turns a gentile into a Jew, then all the more so does it work wonders on the soul of someone who was born a Jew..."

**The** mikveh completely removes all *kelipot* and negative forces that surround us.

**The** holy Arizal writes<sup>17</sup> that when a Jew gets angry (which is a severe sin), they cause themselves immeasurable damage, and their

soul departs from them! During that time, it's the powers of impurity that sustain them. However, when they do teshuva and immerse in a mikveh, they restore the soul that departed from them. **Therefore, even someone who isn't accustomed to go to the mikveh all year round should make every effort to immerse in a mikveh on the eve of Rosh Hashanah.**

**In** our book *Chelev Haarets*,<sup>18</sup> we brought all of the *Kavanot HaT'vilah* (intentions for immersion in a mikveh), including those written by the Ben Ish Chai.<sup>19</sup> The Ben Ish Chai writes that one must immerse five times on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, and in each immersion, have a different *kavana*:

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...*~* **Wellspring of Wisdom** *~*...

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**16.** In previous generations, women also immersed in a mikveh on the eve of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. However, nowadays, the custom is that women do not immerse in the mikveh except for times of mitzvah, in order to avoid various mishaps.

**17.** Sefer HaLikutim (Parashat V'Zot HaBerachah, ch. 11).

**18.** Chelev Haarets (Vol. 6).

**19.** Ben Ish Chai - Year 1 - (Nitzavim, 3).



**Parashat Nitzavim - Rosh Hashanah - The Last Preparations**

**1<sup>st</sup>** immersion - To be cleansed of all impurity.

**2<sup>nd</sup>** immersion - To do a *Tikkun* for the sin of anger and restore all parts of the souls that have departed during the sin.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** immersion - To sweeten the *din* and *gevurah* with *chesed*.

**4<sup>th</sup>** immersion - To cast off the spiritual garments of the weekdays and end this year and its troubles.

**5<sup>th</sup>** immersion - To receive the holy light of Rosh Hashanah and to commence the new year and its blessings.

**Blessed** is the one that does these *kavanot*...

**The Last Preparations**

**The** sun is advancing quickly towards the holy day of Rosh Hashanah. The time for *Mincha* has arrived...

**This** lofty, exalted *Mincha* prayer is the last prayer of the year. Blessed is the one who merits praying now with great intention.

**HaRav** Yoram would always remind us that since this is the last prayer of the year, its power is immense.

**Because** of the fast pace of life and the storm of emotions that come with it, there are sure to be some prayers that we missed,

or even one's that we *did* pray, but our hearts just weren't there...

**Now** is a great opportunity to make up for any shortcomings.

**This** *Mincha*, the last *tefillah* of the year, has the power to do a complete *tikkun* for all of the prayers of the previous year. This is why it's important to pray with a congregation that prays slowly and without any pressure, and not one that prays quickly only to get it over with. This is for sure a prayer that's worth investing in.

**Now** let's move on to the main *avodah* of Rosh Hashanah...

**Last in Creation, First in Superiority**

**Even** though all of Am Israel prays the same prayers every day,

and thousands of years have passed since the prayers were composed

by *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah*, with this said, we must remember that every prayer is an entirely new reality. Every prayer causes new *tikkunim* that have never arisen.

**These** are the words of Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin...<sup>20</sup>

**All** that's been revealed to us about the *kavanot* of *tefillah* from the *Rishonim* until the holy Arizal, who wondrously arranged incredible and lofty *kavanot*, are not even a drop in the ocean compared to the inner depths of the *kavanot* of the *Anshei Knesset HaGedolah*, composers of the set prayers that we know today. Those who are capable of understanding will quickly realize that no one in the world is capable of composing such a remarkable *Tikkun*. To integrate and conceal in a single fixed prayer, *tikkunim* for all the upper and lower worlds, and arrangements of the *Merkava*...<sup>21</sup>

From the moment it was composed until the coming of Mashiach, speedily in our days, there has never been and never will be two prayers that resemble each other... This wouldn't have been possible if not for the tremendous level of prophecy that manifested on them during the arrangement of the *tefillot* and *brachot*. Hashem placed in their mouths these specific words, and within them are hidden all the *tikkunim*...

**Now** we can understand how imperative it is for every one of us to contemplate the words of the *tefillah* and make an effort to draw wisdom from them that will help us cling to Hashem.<sup>22</sup>

**In** the *tefillah* of Rosh Hashanah, we say, "Reign over the entire world with Your glory," which is the peak of Rosh Hashanah, in which Am Israel crown Hashem as King!

...*~* Wellspring of Wisdom *~*...

**20.** Nefesh HaChaim 2:13.

**21. The** *Merkava* is essentially how all the worlds interconnect and interact with each other. The tzaddikim are also called *Merkava* for the *Shechina* because they are

completely nullified to Hashem that they merit having the *Shechina* rest on them.

**22. These** are my father's heroic efforts in obtaining a High Holiday prayer book in a Siberian Labor Camp...

**Parashat Nitzavim - Rosh Hashanah - Last in Creation, First in Superiority**

**In** 1951, my father, Rabbi Moshe Greenberg, didn't recite *Kol Nidre*.

**Instead**, he was a prisoner in a labor camp in Siberia...

**At** age 20, my father's crime was trying to escape from Russia.

**He** dreamed of making aliyah. But he was caught and sentenced to 25 years of hard labor, leaving behind his parents, two sisters and a brother (a prisoner in another camp for a similar "crime").

**The** job of 1,000 men at my father's labor camp was creating an electric station. About 20 of the prisoners were Jewish.

**At** the end of the summer, the Jewish prisoners yearned to observe the upcoming High Holidays.

**They** knew they would lack a *shofar* (ram's horn), Torah scroll and *Tallitot* (prayer shawls), but they hoped they could find a *machzor* (High Holiday prayer book).

**My** father spotted a man from the outside, an engineer who worked for the camp on certain projects. He believed the engineer might be a Jew.

**"Kenstu meer efsher helfen"** – "perhaps you can help me" he asked the engineer in Yiddish.

**At** that time, most Russian Jews were fluent in Yiddish. He saw the flicker of understanding in the engineer's eyes.

**"Can** you bring a machzor for me, for the Jews here?" he asked.

**The** engineer hesitated.

**Such** transaction would endanger both of their lives. Even so, the engineer agreed to try.

**A** few days passed.

**"Any** developments?" my father asked the engineer.

**"Good** news and bad news," he replied.

**He** had located a machzor with difficulty, but it was the only machzor belonging to his girlfriend's father, and the man was furious when his daughter asked him to give it up. Maybe she told him why she wanted it, maybe not.

**My** father would not relent, however.

**Perhaps**, he suggested, the man would lend him the book and he could copy it and return it in time for Rosh Hashanah.

**In** secrecy, the engineer handed the machzor to my father.

**To** copy it, my father built a large wooden box and crawled into it for a few hours everyday.

**There**, hidden from view, he copied the book, line for line into a notebook. After a month, he had copied the entire machzor, but there was one page missing – *Kol Nidre* - the very first prayer recited at Yom Kipper.

**My** father returned the book, and autumn arrived.

**But** we must understand, what is the essence of this

coronation and for what purpose is it needed... ?

## **Renew Your Relationship**

**Hashem** desired there to be a physical representation of His

Kingship in this world. From this representation, we would be able

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### *~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

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**The** Jewish prisoners learned the dates of the impending holidays from letters from home and, on the holiday, they bribed the guards, probably with cigarettes, to let them gather in the barrack for services.

**With** his handwritten prayer book, my father served as *hazzan* (cantor) and recited each prayer, repeated by others in low solemn voices.

**Seven** days later, they met for *Kol Nidre* services.

**But** despite their efforts, none of the worshippers could recall all of the words of that prayer form memory.

**After** nearly seven years in jail, my father, along with all political prisoners, were released, owing to the death of Joseph Stalin. The only item my father took with him was his machzor.

**He** reunited with his family near Moscow and later married.

**I** was an infant when, in 1967, 15 years after his release from prison, my family was allowed to immigrate to Israel.

**The** machzor came with us.

**My** father, who still lives in Bnei Brak, Israel, doesn't like to remember those painful years in Siberia. But on the rare occasions that I hear him tell a story, he tearfully states that he had never participated in services as meaningful as those in prison.

**In** 1973, he visited the Lubavitcher rebbe in New York City and presented the machzor to him as a gift.

**A** few months ago, I visited the rebbe's library and found my father's machzor.

**I** looked at the worn book with its fragile pages and Hebrew letters written in haste and with such respect and determination.

I copied it – on a copying machine.

**This** Yom Kippur, as I lead services at the Chabad Jewish Center of Solon, I will have with me the copy of my father's machzor, with the *Kol Nidre* prayer still missing.

**My** father couldn't recite *Kol Nidre* during his years in prison. This year I will ask my congregation, and all of us, to say it for him and anyone else who may not have the opportunity to do so.

- My Father's Handwritten Machzor  
by Rabbi Zushe Greenberg.

to slightly grasp His Kingship in Heaven. That is why He made man kings in the world.

**In** the past, kings reigned with complete authority. Today, the few countries that still have kings have been reluctant to give their monarchs unrestrained power. Instead, the king is under the control of the government.

**In** a republic, the people rule, or rather, the political parties rule. There's no longer fear of one person ruling everything.

One question...

**Since** Hashem made us kings in this world so that we would have some resemblance of the Heavenly

Kingship, why then are there no more kings in the world today ?

**The** answer is that Hashem interacts with us by means of *Midah Keneged Midah* (measure for measure).

**When** the world as a whole believed in Hashem, they were given a physical king to represent Hashem's Kingship. However, when the world looks like it does today, there'll inevitably be a major decrease in the reign of kings.

**This** was done by *Hashgacha Pratit* for us to crown only Hashem King.<sup>23</sup>

**Or**, more simply, to accept *Ol Malchut Shemayim*, to accept

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**23. There** once lived a poor orphan named Moshe.

**As** a little boy, Moshele went to Yeshiva where he learned Chumash and Gemara. When he grew a little older needed to earn a living to survive.

**He** gathered a collection of odds and ends and set out to peddle his wares to the peasants and farmers who lived in the surrounding villages. Moshe wasn't scared to work hard, but he was

troubled that he couldn't continue to receive a better Torah education.

**One** wintry day Moshele was trudging along on a snow-covered road, with his basketful of merchandise under his arm. He knew some Tehillim by heart and recited them cheerily as he walked.

**The** snow kept on falling from the gray skies, and soon he found himself plodding ankle-deep in snow. It was getting difficult to walk, and it was even

## Parashat Nitzavim - Rosh Hashanah - Renew Your Relationship

more challenging to follow the road, which was now completely covered with snow as far as the eye could see.

**Unwittingly** he strayed off the road and found himself in the woods. Feeling tired, Moshele found a tree stump and sat down to rest. “No, you must not fall asleep,” he kept on telling himself, “it is very dangerous; you might freeze to death!” He sat there huddled up and shivering, trying in vain to keep himself warm and his eyes open...

**A** peasant passing on the road in his sledge noticed the huddled figure of a lad almost entirely covered with snow.

**He** stopped his horse and ran to the body. He brushed the snow off and found that the body was almost frozen stiff, with no sign of life.

**Without** losing time, the peasant set to work.

**He** pulled out his knife and cut up the clothing around the still body. Then he started to rub it briskly with snow until the blood began to flow in the young body again, and the boy stirred.

**The** peasant then carried the lad to his sledge, covered him up, and drove his horse as fast as possible to his home in the nearby village. There he again rubbed the lad’s body some more and poured some brandy down the boy’s throat, covered him up, and carried him next to the fireplace.

**The** crowing of the rooster woke Moshele up early the next morning.

Moshele opened his eyes and looked around bewildered.

**The** farmer’s wife was up and came up to see him. “How do you feel?” she asked him in Russian, “All right, but where am I?”

**“What** is your name?” she asked him.

**Moshele** tried to think hard but could not remember. “I don’t know,” he said, thinking how strange it was that he could not remember his own name. “Never mind,” said the peasant woman, “we’ll call you Peter.”

**Thus** Moshele, or Peter as he was now called by all, remained in the peasant’s home, little knowing that he was a Jewish boy and did not belong there at all.

**When** summer came, Peter helped the farmer in all the work in the field: plowing, sowing, and reaping. Peter was an industrious, capable lad, and the farmer was delighted with him.

**One** day the farmer said to Peter: “Tomorrow, we shall drive to town and take some of our produce to the market.”

**Peter** was happy and looked forward to seeing the town.

**When** they finally got there the next day, the marketplace and all the streets were deserted.

**When** they passed by the Beit Hakneset, they saw it crowded with worshippers, and the peasant realized it was a Jewish holiday. There was nothing to do but

His Kingship. We have to learn how to completely give ourselves over to Hashem.

**Are** there any better hands to be in anyway? Hashem does everything for us... Feeds us, clothes us, shelters us, and most essential, gives us life! Why then can't we just put our heads down and admit that He knows best. Why then can't we just do things as He wants. Without a doubt, what He wants is the best thing for us. This is what we really need to

work on before Rosh Hashanah, and whoever didn't start before Rosh Hashanah should make it their resolution for the new year...

**Hashem's** Kingship is what Rosh Hashanah is all about and is the primary theme of the prayers, "Reign over the entire world with Your glory." - You, Hashem, know what's best for me and for the entire world, so You reign!

**It's** impossible to connect to Hashem so long that you haven't accepted him as King. Even

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*~ Wellspring of Wisdom ~*

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return home. But Peter felt an irresistible desire to look into the Beit Hakneset.

**Peter** came in quietly and stood by the door; no one paid any attention to him.

**His** heart began to beat faster; somehow, the scene was familiar to him. Had he ever been here before? His memory returned to him as a flash of memories back to the surface.

**The** tune and melodies of the Chazzan were familiar to him... Siddurim...  
Torah scrolls...

**Peter** stood motionless and stared.

**Suddenly** he heard - Tekiah - and the blast of the ram's horn pierced the air.

**Shevarim**, Teruah - and again, the broken sound of the Shofar seemed to stab Peter's heart.

**Tekiah** - ah - ah - the Shofar called again...

**"Moshele**, you are a Jew," the Shofar called.

**"Moshele**, you are a Jew! Hurry now... Now is the time to return to Hashem... Tekiah - Teruah..."

**Everything** now became very clear to Moshele...

**"Dear** Hashem, forgive me," Moshele cried and fainted.

**The** Complete Story of Tishrei by Rabbi Nissan Mindel (Kehot Publication).

teshuva can only come after the acceptance of Hashem's Kingship, for regretting our mistakes and resolving to do better in the future can only come as a result of wanting to do Hashem's will...

**The** Gemara<sup>24</sup> tells about how Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai secretly met with the Roman Ceasar and said to him, "Shalom to you, the king, Shalom to you, the king." The Caesar replied, "You are liable for two death penalties. One, because I am not the king, and you called me king, and two, if I am the king, why didn't you come to me until now?"

**It's** told that when Rebbe Aharon of Karlin read the words of the Gemara, he cried, "If we refer to Hashem as King, does this not provoke the question, "If I am your King, why did you not come to me until now?" How can we respond to that?!"

**Honestly**, what will we respond to that? When will we truly come to Hashem? When will we sincerely accept his Kingship...?

**The** inauguration of a king is meant to emphasize the king's majesty. Not so with Hashem. The purpose of Rosh Hashanah is to emphasize *us*. The truth is, Hashem's majesty is infinite. It's beyond our power to emphasize it. We can only praise the virtues of something that we can grasp.

**That** being so, the very fact that we've been given the opportunity to crown and praise Hashem is a sign of His humility. When we coronate Hashem, we're not honoring Hashem. Rather, Hashem is honoring us. Rosh Hashanah is Hashem's way of showing how beloved we are to Him. It highlights the fact that we are so important that we have a connection with Hashem, the creator of all the worlds!

**Hashem** desires the same - that we crown Him. He is troubled, so to speak, that his relationship with us still hasn't materialized.

**The** Maggid of Mezritch explains that we, and Hashem, are each half of a figure which can



only be completed when each half is attached to the other. Thus, Hashem wants us to crown Him, and we request of Him to become our King.

**Hashem** just wants us to draw closer, and for

every step we take, He takes two...

**May** we all merit to truly draw close to Hashem and renew our relationship with Him by crowning Him King, Amen.

**Shabbat Shalom!**



## *The Pathway...*

**1.** The holy day of Rosh Hashanah is the great Day of Judgment, in which it's decreed on every person every detail that will occur with them throughout the next year, in all areas of life.

**2.** While in years past, many people took life for granted and it may have seemed that all they had to pray for was quality of life. That isn't the case today. As the years go by and we approach our final redemption, we see with our own eyes how much suffering accompanies this process. The feeling and understanding that we truly have nothing to request but life, and that the rest is trivial, is strengthened in our hearts every day that goes by.

**3.** Anyone who's lucky and received the gift of life for another day, and certainly another week or month or year, even if money is tight, health is poor, peace in the home is shaky, the children are difficult, there's no reason for them not to be happy! We have to

thank Hashem day and night for this gift!

**4.** If we first and foremost value the things related to why we were sent to this world, such as Torah and mitzvot, consequently, all the small things such as acquiring wealth, fame, etc., will become insignificant, and therefore we'll have more time to spend on the things that really matter in life...

**5.** Since on Rosh Hashanah, the books of life and death are opened before Hashem, and the entire world is judged, it's vital that we prepare ourselves.

**6.** The 29<sup>th</sup> of Elul is the last day of the year. When a person does teshuva and prays on this day, they have the ability to do a *tikkun* (correction) for the past year. Therefore, when we come to pray *Arvit*, we should have in mind that this is the last *Arvit* of the year, and even more so should we approach it seriously.

**7.** We should all spend a few minutes alone during this day, without a cellphone, without any

*The Pathway...*

distractions, and contemplate on the past year... One of the things that helps us come out of the judgment innocent is if they see in heaven that we truly prepared for it beforehand and entered the day of judgment seriously and with a surrendered heart. Even if you did all the sins in the world, Hashem forgives them.

**8.** On the eve of Rosh Hashanah, as we prepare for judgment, we should try to accumulate as many merits as possible, and there is no greater merit for someone married than to honor their spouse. Rabbi Chaim Vital zt'l writes that the main accusation in heaven against man is on how he behaved at home with his wife !

**9.** Before entering Rosh Hashanah, we have to learn how to completely give ourselves over to Hashem. Are there any better hands to be in anyway? Hashem does everything for us... Feeds us, clothes us, shelters us, and most essential, gives us life ! Without a doubt, what He wants is the best thing for us. This is what we really need to work on before Rosh Hashanah, and whoever didn't start before Rosh Hashanah should make it their resolution for the new year...

**May** we all merit to truly draw close to Hashem and renew our relationship with Him by crowning Him King, Amen.





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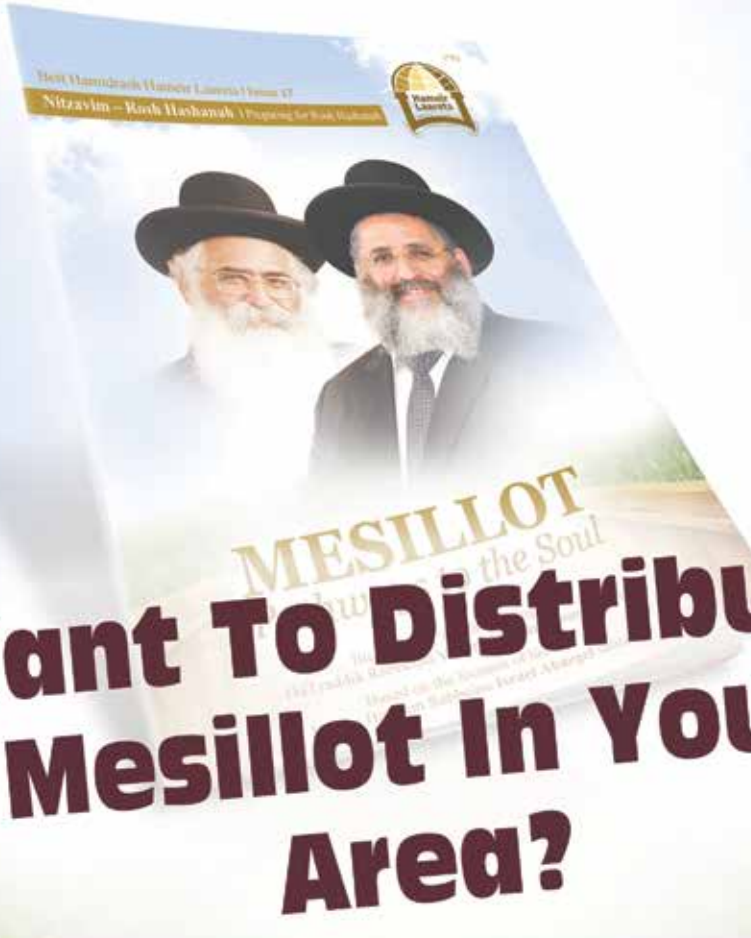
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New York	6:33 pm	7:31 pm	8:02 pm
Miami	6:57 pm	7:49 pm	8:27 pm
Los Angeles	6:30 pm	7:24 pm	7:59 pm
Montreal	6:31 pm	7:32 pm	8:00 pm
Toronto	6:55 pm	7:54 pm	8:24 pm
London	6:41 pm	7:44 pm	8:07 pm
Jerusalem	6:19 pm	7:08 pm	7:51 pm
Tel Aviv	6:16 pm	7:05 pm	7:47 pm
Haifa	6:15 pm	7:04 pm	7:46 pm
Be'er Sheva	6:16 pm	7:05 pm	7:47 pm

**Pathways  
to the Heart**

*From the Words of  
HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l*

*Nothing should make you happier than knowing that Hashem has granted you, children. However, you have to know that raising children on the correct path takes endless amounts of prayers.*

*Parenting isn't something that should be taken for granted... Look how much Avraham invested in Ishmael and how much time and effort Itzchak put in Esav, yet, they didn't succeed... For this reason, Yaakov Avinu decided that he wasn't going to do anything in his life but watch after his children. He gave everything he had for his children.*



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BS"O  
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**A Letter of Blessing for the New Year**

Dear beloved friends of the English speaking Hameir Laarets community,

First of all, I wish you all a Shana Tovah U'Metuka. I thank Hashem every day for the opportunity to be connected with such a wonderful group of Jewish people. How fortunate are we that you choose to learn our weekly publication, Mesillot!

May Hashem grant you all abundance of health, happiness, life, and prosperity. Fitting Zivugim for your children and plenty of Shalom Bayit.

May you all merit joining us in the dissemination of the Torah and Judaism throughout the world, and of course, may we all merit the final redemption, together, speedily in our days, Amen!

With blessings for a Chatimah Tovah,  
Rabbi Israel Abargel shlita  
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