

SHABBOS IN THE PARASHAH

by Rabbi Binyomin Adler

This week is Parashas Nitzavim, which will be followed this coming week by Rosh HaShanah. The general approach to Rosh HaShanah is that it is a day of judgment, when HaShem judges the whole world and decides what will be the outcome for the coming year. It is difficult, however, for a person to feel like he is being judged when he cannot see the judge and is uncertain of what actions he performed in the past that require judgment. When one commits a felony, he is aware of his crime and he usually has an idea of what is in store for him regarding his punishment. Regarding the Heavenly judgment, however, one has performed so many actions in the past that it is virtually impossible to recall what he did right and what he did wrong. Furthermore, it is impossible for a human to grasp the depth of the Heavenly judgment, as it is said (Tehillim 36:7) *mishpatecha tihom rabbah*, Your judgments are like the vast deep waters. Additionally, the main theme of the day on Rosh HaShanah is prayer, as we declare HaShem's kingship and pray for our materialistic needs. How do we reconcile the idea that on the one hand, we are standing in judgment, and on the other hand, we are given the opportunity to pray for our lives and our sustenance? In order to gain insight into the essence of Rosh HaShanah, it is worth examining a Gemara that sheds light on this matter. The Gemara (Rosh HaShanah 16b) states: Rabbi Yitzchak said: a year that is impoverished in the beginning will be wealthy at the end, as it is said (Devarim 11:12) *mereishis hashanah*, from the beginning of the year. The word *mereishis* is written without an aleph, thus the root word is from the word *rash*, meaning poor. It is said further in that verse *viad acaharis*, and until the end, and this denotes that there is an end. Rashi and Tosfos explain that the Gemara means to say that when the Jewish People make themselves like poor people on Rosh HaShanah, supplicating before HaShem, HaShem has compassion on them and favors them. One must wonder, however, why the Gemara deemed it necessary to quote a verse that appears to be unrelated to Rosh HaShanah, and derive this idea from the fact that the word for beginning is spelled without the letter aleph. I would like to suggest a novel approach to explain this Gemara. We refer to the upcoming holiday as Rosh HaShanah, which is literally translated as the head of the year. I once heard someone explain that the reason why this day is referred to as the "head" of the year is because the head is the most important organ of the body. Similarly, our future is dependent on Rosh HaShanah. What are we supposed to be thinking about on this most significant day? We are required to declare HaShem as king, and we accomplish this by blowing the shofar. The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 3:4) writes that although the mitzvah of shofar is mandated by the Torah, there is also a rationale to blowing the shofar. The sound of the shofar is meant to arouse us from our slumber and to exhort us to repent from our evil ways. Thus, on Rosh HaShanah, we are required to take a second look at ourselves and

see how we fit into HaShem's Master Plan. In order for one to offer himself an objective perspective of his alignment with HaShem's will, it would be prudent for one to become as close as possible to HaShem. How does one become close to HaShem? Scripture offers us the answer to this dilemma. It is said (Yeshaya 57:15) *ki choh amar ram vinisa shimo marom vikadosh eshkon vies daka ushfal ruach lihachayos ruach shefalim ulihachayos leiv nidkaim*, for thus said the exalted and uplifted One, Who abides forever and Whose Name is holy: I abide in exaltedness and holiness, but I am with the despondent and lowly of spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the despondent. The Gemara (Sota 5a) offers a homiletic interpretation to the words *es daka*. One opinion maintains that the words can be read *iti daka*, with Me is the humble one, which Rashi explains to mean that HaShem is declaring, "I elevate the humble one until he resides with Me. The second opinion maintains that the words can be interpreted to mean *ani es daka*, that HaShem, so to speak, lowers His Presence to the one who is humble. According to both opinions, however, one who is humble is deemed to be with HaShem. Armed with this perspective, we can gain a better understanding into this Day of Judgment. On Rosh HaShanah one must demonstrate true humility. A true king is not one who lords it over his subjects. Rather, the real king is one who acts with humility. HaShem Himself is humble, as depicted in the verse in Yeshaya and in numerous statements in the Gemara and Medrash. Hashem desires that we emulate His ways, and when we act in a humble fashion, then we can be close to HaShem. With this premise we can better understand the verse that states (Tehillim 36:7) *tzidkasecho kiharirei kel mishpatecha tihom rabbah adam uviheimah toshia HaShem*, Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains; Your judgments are like the deep vast waters; You save both man and beast, O HaShem. The Gemara (Chulin 5b; see Rashi Ibid Tehillim) explains that the verse refers to those who are cunning in knowledge, and yet they still humble themselves like an animal. Perhaps it is for this reason that Scripture juxtaposes the idea of judgment to the idea of humility. If one wishes to gain a glimpse into the ways of HaShem's judgment, one must humble himself, and then he will be with HaShem. This, then, is the meaning of the Gemara that states that a year that is impoverished in the beginning will be wealthy at the end. When one humbles himself on Rosh HaShanah, he will be with HaShem and one who is with HaShem is guaranteed wealth, as it is said (Mishlei 10:22) *bircas HaShem hi taashir*, it is the blessing of HaShem that enriches. We can now also understand why the Gemara in Rosh HaShanah cited the verse that states ((Devarim 11:12) *eretz asher HaShem Elokecha doreish osah tamid einei HaShem Elokecha bah mereishis hashanah viad acaharis hashanah*, a Land that HaShem, your G-d, seeks out; the eyes of HaShem, your G-d, are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to year's end. The Sefarim write that the word *eretz*, translated as land, can also be interpreted as *ratzon*, which means will. Thus, we can suggest that the verse is alluding to the idea that we mentioned that HaShem seeks out the one who is humble, i.e., the one who is performing His will. Thus, on Rosh HaShanah, HaShem seeks out those who humble themselves before Him with prayer and repentance, and those people will be guaranteed a wealthy year. It is noteworthy that the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 11:1) interprets the verse of *bircas HaShem hi taashir* to be referring to Shabbos. On Shabbos we rejoice in HaShem's kingship, and the method of recognizing HaShem as our king is by humbling

ourselves before Him. HaShem should allow us to merit this great sense of humility, and then He will shine His glory upon us, and the whole world will know of HaShem's existence. The entire Jewish People should merit a Ksiva Vachasima Tova and the arrival of Moshiach Tzidkienu, speedily, in our days.

Shabbos in the Zemiros Askinu Seudasa

Composed by the Arizal, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria Rishimin usisimin bigo kol almin biram atik yomin hala batish batishin, inscribed and constant is the Shabbos throughout the universe, for He of Most Ancient Days pounded the elements to fashion the world. What is the association of Shabbos to the fact that HaShem pounded the four primeval elements to create the world? Perhaps the answer to this question is that in the Shabbos evening prayers we recite the words atah kidashta es yom hashevii lishmecho tachlis maaseh shamayim vaaretz, You sanctified the seventh day for Your Name's sake, the conclusion of the creation of heaven and earth. Thus, we see that the ultimate goal of creation was Shabbos. It is for this reason that we declare in this passage that the Shabbos is inscribed and constant throughout the universe, for HaShem pounded the elements to fashion the world, and the world was created to reach its pinnacle on the Holy Shabbos.

Shabbos in Tefillah

Tiferes atah liyom hamenucha, with splendor He wrapped the Day of Contentment. The Gemara (Shabbos 10b) states that HaShem told Moshe, "I have a wonderful gift in My treasure house and Shabbos is its name and I wish to give it to the Jewish People. Go and inform them. Thus, we see that although we receive the Shabbos, it is deemed to be concealed. Perhaps this is the explanation for the words that we recite in this passage that with splendor HaShem wrapped the Day with Contentment, i.e. HaShem concealed the holiness of Shabbos, so to speak, in His Cloak of Splendor.

Shabbos Story

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky writes: After World War II, the Klausenberger Rebbe, Rabbi Yukisiel Halberstam, of blessed memory, a survivor of the concentration camps held a minyan in the Beth Moses Hospital in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn. Parshas Ki Savo arrived and with it, the section known as the tochacha (admonishment), which is filled with foreboding warnings of doom and destruction, lest the Jewish nation stray from the will of G-d. The verses warn of unimaginable horrors: exile, starvation, rape, robbery, and torture - to name just a few. The custom of Jews world-over is to read the verses of tochacha quietly, so as not to rile up enemies, celestial and otherwise, who may think those calamities a good idea to cast upon the Jewish Nation. It was the portion of Ki Savo, and the Klausenberger Rebbe and his minyan of ravaged survivors were about to read the tochacha and re-live horrors of their recent history through the words of the ancient prophecies. The Torah-reader started the verses of doom in a hushed tone. He began reading them quietly and quickly. Suddenly the Rebbe banged on his lectern. "Hecher!" he shouted. (Yiddish for louder.) The reader looked up from the Torah with a puzzled look on his face. Perhaps he was

reading the Torah a bit too low. He raised his voice a notch, and continued in a louder undertone. But the Rebbe was not satisfied. "Louder!" he exclaimed. By now the reader was reading as loudly as his normal recitation, and yet the Rebbe continued to bang on the lectern and exclaim, "HECHER!" The reader could not contain his puzzlement and instead of shouting the portion he stopped and looked to the Rebbe for an explanation. "We no longer have to read these miserable curses quietly," the Rebbe exclaimed. "There is no curse we have not experienced. There is no affliction we have not suffered! We saw it all. We lived it all. Let us shout with pride to our Father in Heaven that we have already received all the curses! We have survived these curses, and now it is His turn to bring us the blessings and the redemption!" And with that the reader continued reading the tochacha loud and clear as if singing an anthem to his nation's tenacity. [Reprinted with permission from Torah.org]

Shabbos in Navi Shmuel I Chapter 10

In this chapter we learn how Shmuel informed Shaul of certain signs that would allow Shaul to prepare for becoming king. Shaul met a band of prophets and prophesied with them. Shaul related to his uncle that the donkeys had been found but he did not relate to him regarding the matter of his becoming king. Shmuel then gathered the Jewish People and informed them that Shaul would become king. It is noteworthy that when Shmuel informed Shaul that he would prophesy with the other prophets, it is said (Shmuel I 10:6) *vitzalcha alecho ruach HaShem vihisnabisa imam vinehepachta liish acher*, the spirit of HaShem will then pass over you, and you will prophesy with them, and you will be transformed into another person. We find that when a person encounters a higher level of spirituality, he is transformed. The Medrash (Baal HaTurim Bamidbar 29:2 citing Pesikta 40) states that only regarding the sacrifices that are offered on Rosh HaShanah does the Torah state (Bamidbar 29:2) *vaasisem olah*, and you shall make a burnt-offering, whereas regarding all the other festivals it is said *vihikravtem*, you shall offer. The reason for this is because on Rosh HaShanah we experience an exalted level of spirituality that transforms us and we are different people. Similarly, the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 11:2) states that the shine on one's face during the week is not the same as the shine one exudes on Shabbos, because the holiness of Shabbos transforms a Jew into a different person.

Shabbos in Agadah

The Gemara (Shabbos 150b) relates an incident with a certain pious man who had a breach in the fence of his field and on Shabbos he decided to mend the breach. Upon remembering that it was Shabbos, the pious man refrained from mending the breach. A miracle occurred on his behalf and a caper tree grew where the breach had been, and the tree provided his livelihood and the livelihoods of his household members. The Arizal (Likutei HaShas) writes that this pious man was Rabbi Yehudah bar Ilai who was a reincarnation of the mekosheish, the man who was caught gathering wood on Shabbos when the Jewish people were in the wilderness. According to the opinion of Rabbi Akiva, the mekosheish was Tzelafchad. With this action, the pious man rectified the sin of Tzelafchad, and it is for this reason that the Gemara states that a tzelaf chad, one caper tree, grew

for him, because the words tzelaf chad spell out the word Tzelafchad. The Ben Yehoyada (Ibid) adds that the mekosheish sinned by gathering wood on Shabbos and he was put to death by stoning. This pious man now honored the Shabbos by not mending the fence of stone and he was rewarded with the tzelaf tree. According to Tosfos (Bava Basra 119b) who maintains that the mekosheish had good intentions, his original good intentions stood in his stead to safeguard the Shabbos even in thought. Thus, he observed the Shabbos in action, speech and thought, and he was therefore rewarded with the tzelaf which has three edible products: its fruit, its flowers and its palm-like shoots.

Shabbos in Halacha

The final condition that is required to allow one to return food to the blech is that one has to have original intent to do so. If when one lifted the pot he intended to remove it permanently, he will then be forbidden to return it. However, if one had no particular intention when lifting the pot, he will be allowed to return the pot, provided that he did not specifically intend to remove it permanently.

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