

Parashat Nitzavim- Vayelech

([You Are] Standing- And he – Moshe – went)

(Notices at the bottom)

Rosh Hashanah Supplement

The Day before Rosh Hashanah

Time should be found for introspection.

A person who sinned against others should ask their forgiveness.

One should give charity

The First Night of Rosh Hashanah

There is a custom to eat certain foods that are reminiscent of blessings with the hope that they should be signs for a good year. Among these foods are dates, apples dipped in honey, pomegranates, leek, carrots, beets and fish.

Rosh Hashanah Prayers

Strictly speaking, it is not required that one stand when the ark is open unless the Sefer Torah is taken out. Nevertheless, there is a mitzvah to stand if one is able and this is the prevalent custom.

It is permitted to add private requests at the end of the Amida

The Shofar

When one hears the Shofar, one should (in addition to realising that one is fulfilling a mitzvah) think about regretting one's mistakes and resolving to improve.

If a man cannot remain in shul for all one hundred sounds, he should try to hear the thirty sounds which are blown before Mussaf or the 30 blown during the repetition of the amidah. Strictly speaking, women are not obligated but the custom is for women to make every effort to hear at least 30 sounds.

Rosh Hashanah Afternoon

There is a custom to perform tashlich on this afternoon. We go to a river and recite certain prayers. In the olden days, it was customary to crown a new king by the river as a symbol that his kingship should continue like the river. On Rosh Hashanah, our awe for G-d is such that we relate to Him like a King. There is no obligation to recite tashlich but it is a widespread custom. It is preferable to do tashlich by a river that has fish. The eyes of fish are constantly open which is an allusion to Divine providence. If the river has no fish, tashlich may still be said there. One is not permitted to throw breadcrumbs to the fish as it is forbidden to feed the fish on Yom Tov. If there is no river at all in the area, one may go to any natural body of water. If one cannot find a natural body of water, one can even say it by an aquarium or container of water. Tashlich may be said after sunset but should be said before nightfall. If you miss the first afternoon of Rosh Hashanah, it can still be said until Yom Kippur or even until Shemini Atzeret according to some opinions.

The Second Day of Rosh Hashanah

The candles for the second day can be lit any time after a time known as Plag Hamincha which is 6:07 pm.

Links

The following links may be helpful in your preparation for Rosh Hashanah.

<http://www.yutorah.org/togo/roshhashana>

<http://www.aish.com/h/hh/rh/101452799.html>

<http://www.aish.com/v/ho/100244454.html>

<http://ohr.edu/roshbook/org.php>

<http://www.aish.com/h/hh/rh/101452799.html>

<http://www.jewish-trivia.com> has 55 multiple choice questions about Rosh Hashana.

Rosh Hashana Cool Videos: The list has 98 cool Rosh HaShana videos. There is something for everyone. - <http://www.jr.co.il/videos/rosh-hashana-videos.htm>

To learn more about Rosh Hashana , you can find on this website 78 links ranging from laws and customs to games and recipes.- <http://www.jr.co.il/hotsites/j-hdayrh.htm>

New Monthly Supplement – Ethics of the Fathers

The last two years have seen the addition of two monthly supplements to our weekly emails – the Mitzvah Heroes and Mitzvah of the Month sections. As we begin another year, I am delighted to begin a new monthly supplement – Ethics of the Fathers. Ethics of the Father is known in Hebrew as Pirkei Avot. It is a compilation of the ethical teachings and maxims of the rabbis of the Mishnaic period. Each month, we will include a teaching from this treasure chest of Jewish wisdom – usually including a short explanation.

Shimon the Righteous used to say: The world depends on three things – on Torah study, on the service [of God] and on kind deeds. (Ethics of the Fathers 1:2)

In this famous statement, Shimon describes the pillars of Jewish religious life: Jewish education, our relationship with God (often understood to refer to prayer) and loving kindness. As we approach Rosh Hashanah, we have the opportunity to reflect on each of these. Have we taken advantage of opportunities to deepen our understanding of the wisdom provided by our Jewish heritage? Can we take a little time to prepare for the prayers of Rosh Hashanah to ensure that they are meaningful? Have we thought not only of ourselves but also how to help other people.

It is also interesting to contemplate the relationship between these three pillars.

Torah study should not just be an academic exercise but should deepen our understanding of our relationship with God (service) and with our fellow men (kind deeds).

What about prayer? How is that connected to the other two pillars? The relationship between prayer and loving kindness is quite obvious. We should pray not only for ourselves but also for others. Each of us knows people who are sick or who are struggling with their livelihood or in other areas. Let us not forget to pray for their wellbeing. Recently, someone explained to me a connection between prayer and Torah study. When we come across an inspiring Jewish message – be it in an article, a lecture or a sermon – we can channel it into a prayer by turning to God and asking Him to help us to internalise and live in accordance with that Jewish idea. In this way, our prayers can be connected not only to our love for others (kind deeds) but also to our Jewish education (Torah study).

Finally, **what is the relationship between loving kindness and the other two pillars?** Our concern for the welfare of others extends beyond physical health and livelihood. If we have been privileged to have been inspired by Jewish ideas, we have the opportunity, not to keep it to ourselves, but to relate to others the enriching ideas or to invite them to programmes in which they too can be beneficiaries of Jewish wisdom. Additionally, our loving kindness is related to our service of God. Human beings share a great deal of characteristics with animals. However, there are important differences: human beings possess a sense of aspiration for a better world, they have access to an advanced sense of morality and have the capacity for outstanding self-sacrifice and even holiness. Whenever we appreciate this dimension of human beings, we experience not their animalistic side but, rather, the Godly dimension to their personality. In drawing close to human beings at their very core, we experience a connection to God.

Sidra Synopsis

In Parashat Nitzavim, Moshe gathers together every member of the people to address them one last time. Moshe takes the opportunity once again to warn the people against idolatry. Moshe emphasises that, even though the people will be punished for the sin of idolatry, they will eventually repent. At that point, G-d will gather in the people from around the globe to the Land of Israel. The people are told that the Torah is not something

unattainable but is within the grasp of all the people. They are told that the options of life and death are placed before them and they should choose life.

In Parashat Vayeilech, Moshe is now coming to the end of his long talk to the Israelites which has spanned the book of Devarim (Deuteronomy). He summons Yehoshua, his successor, and instructs him to be a strong and courageous leader. He then tells the priests that, every seven years, they must gather all the people together so that the Torah can be read to them.

Hashem tells Moshe that his days are drawing near and that he should stand in the Tent of Meeting together with Yehoshua. Hashem tells Moshe that the people are going to rebel against G-d. He tells him that he must teach them a particular song (which we find in next week's sidra). Moshe writes the words of the Torah into a book and instructs the Levites to keep it by the Ark of the Covenant so it will be a reminder for the times when the Israelites will stray away from Hashem.

Message from the Parsha

The people are instructed to choose life. Very often, in our own lives, we are confronted with choices of how to behave. We can choose to waste our time doing things which are not really valuable or we can do things which are of real value to ourselves and to other people. Over the coming week, let us choose to use our time well and try to waste time as little as possible. Then we will really be choosing life!

Parsha Quiz

1. What does Moshe warn the Israelites about?
2. What will happen when the Jewish People will repent?
3. What does Moshe tell the priests that they must do every seven years?
4. What does Hashem tell Moshe that the Jewish People will do?
5. Where should the book of the Torah be kept?

Answers: 1. Idolatry; 2. Hashem will gather them back to the land; 3. Gather the people together and read the Torah to them; 4. They will stop following the ways of Hashem; 5. By the Ark of the Covenant

A Deeper Look

As we have mentioned, we read in our sidra that Hashem commands Moshe to write down a song. We mentioned in the sidra synopsis that this song is found in next week's sidra and, indeed, that is the plain interpretation. However, the Oral Law, gave this verse a broader interpretation. It understood the verse to mean that every Jew has a mitzvah to take some part in the writing of a Torah scroll. It is interesting to see that the Sages saw the term 'song' as one which was fitting for the Torah. In what way is the Torah a song? Many answers have been suggested. One of them is that it is not merely sufficient for us to have an intellectual relationship with our Jewish heritage. Rather, our relationship with Torah has a powerful emotional component. When the Sefer Torah passes us in shul, we kiss it. In a few weeks, we will take out the Sifrei Torah on Simchat Torah to dance with them. This is why we relate to the Torah as song rather than just words. The tune arouses and expresses our emotional connection. That is why our prayers are so full of tunes and, indeed, why we do not read from the Torah but sing.

Notices

1. Soup Walk

Sponsored night walk through the east end of London 10pm, Saturday 9th October 2010
Departs Liverpool St. Station

Take part in this unique night time charity walk (10km) through the historic East End of London to raise money for the needy, including Holocaust survivors living in poverty in Israel

ON COMPLETION, A CUP OF WARM SOUP WILL BE SERVED TO ALL PARTICIPANTS, MUCH AS IT WAS SERVED TO THE NEW IMMIGRANTS ARRIVING AT THE TURN OF THE LAST CENTURY.

Registration fees: £20 per person (you raise a min of £75 in sponsorship); £50 per family (you raise a min of £100 in sponsorship)

Today in 2010 Meir Panim runs in Israel a network of 14 Soup Kitchens mainly to support new immigrants and Holocaust survivors.

For booking please visit: <http://www.meirpanimuk.org/events/details/24-Soup-Walk>

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Anthony