



**PARSHAS  
NITZAVIM/  
VAYELECH  
ROSH HASHANAH**

**5771  
SHALOSH SEUDAH  
TORAH**

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH  
\$1.00 EACH

**Revised Version**

# **We Endure through the Mitzvah of Emunah**

## **The Jewish People will Survive the Exiles**

In last week's parsha, Moshe Rabbeinu warned the Jewish People of the bitter punishments that would befall them if they would stray from the path of Hashem. The Jewish People trembled; would they be able to endure such tragic upheaval?

Hashem reassures them in this week's parsha, אתם נצבים, you will stand forever: Your tribal leaders, your elders, your officers, every man of Israel, your young children, your wives, the convert who is in the midst of your camp; from your woodchopper to the drawer of your water –every individual will stand ready before G-d at the time of the ultimate redemption.

History testifies to both the horror of the punishments forewarned last week, and the astounding resilience of the Jewish people.

## **Every Single Jew will be Redeemed**

The seven weeks between Tisha B'Av and Rosh Hashanah are referred to as "שבעה" דנחמתא, seven weeks of consolation. During each of these weeks, we read a chapter of consolation from the prophecies of Yeshaya as the Haftorah.

The Haftorah of the first week began: "נְחַמוּ נְחַמוּ עַמִּי ... דַּבְּרוּ עַל-לֵב יְרוּשָׁלַם ... כִּי מְלֵאָה צָבָאָה" 'Be doubly consoled my nation... Speak to the heart of Yerushalayim... for her legions are full.'

The exile had seemed interminably prolonged, but there was justification for it. We had to wait for every single soul to be ready. Now your legions are full, every soul is accounted for. The redemption did not come at the expense of Jewish souls.

The travails of exile are not arbitrary. Hashem carefully monitors the suffering each individual endures as he prepares him for the redemption of Tzion.

This Haftorah ends with the words "אִישׁ לֹא נֶעְדָר" - not one man will be missing. G-d will ensure that each Jew will be included in the final redemption.

Parshas Nitzavim, the last parsha of the שבעה דנחמתא, begins by enumerating each category of Jews standing strong before G-d. They endured the worst horrors of exile and are now rectified and ready for the redemption.

## **The Most Important Mitzvah of Our Times is Emunah (Faith)**

The Jewish Nation was on a sublime spiritual level when Hashem revealed Himself to them at Mount Sinai and they accepted upon themselves the 613 mitzvos of the Torah. At that time, they had the ability to focus on fulfilling each of them perfectly.

As the generations weakened, they lost the ability to focus on every single mitzvah with absolute intensity. Prophets advised that, although they must fulfill every commandment of the Torah, their focus should be on a few of the core commandments. This would ultimately lead them to fulfill all of them.

As the generations continued to decline, subsequent prophets reduced the amount of core commandments selected for intense awareness.

The very last prophet, Chabakuk, encapsulated all of the commandments into the most basic one: Emunah – faith in Hashem; "וְיִצְדִיק בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ יְהוָה", 'A righteous person lives through his Faith.' Someone with complete Emunah will ultimately fulfill the entire Torah.<sup>7</sup>

The words of Chabakuk - the last prophet - are directed to us - the last generation before the coming of Mashiach. We are so bombarded by evil enticements, and so spiritually exhausted by the lengthy exile, that we can only concentrate on one commandment. The most crucial one was therefore chosen - Emunah.

## Exploring Emunah

The Rebbe Reb Hersch Leib of Ulik zt"l, disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch, related a revelation he experienced:

There was a heavenly demonstration by a collective of Souls. They complained, "We are tired of being born into human bodies, sinning, and then being reincarnated to relive our lives properly. How long will this go on? We keep on failing, we want a permanent solution!"

Duma - the angel in charge of souls - realized that this was beyond his authority and directed them to his superior. His superior realized that this was also too much for him and directed them further above. This went on until they reached G-d himself.

Hashem presented them with a compromise. "You will achieve rectification with the fulfillment of only one Mitzvah: Emunah."

The Tzaddik concluded, "This means, not saying 'וואלט' (would've, could've, should've).

Let us visualize a practical application of this principle. Mr. Goldberg has an important business meeting at 10:30 am. He asks his wife to have breakfast ready on time so that he should not be late. His wife is busy, she forgets; the deal is off and there goes his fortune.

He is irate! "You *should've* prepared breakfast for me on time! I *would've* made so much money! I *could've* been rich!" Mr. Goldberg is missing this fundamental principle of Emunah: No one can harm me or do me any good if it is not the will of Hashem. His wife has no power to hurt or help him; he has no reason to be angry at her. Besides, everything Hashem does is for the good. There is no reason to be angry at all!

The legion of Jewish souls will be complete when they return to Yerushalayim. Every last soul will join, *צבאה* will be *full*. *צבאה*, when you *fill* out the word and spell out each letter, *בית אלף הי*, *צדיק*, is gematria "וְיִצְדִיק בְּאֵמוּנָתוֹ יְהוָה" (they both equal 742). With faith alone, the souls of the last generation will be rectified and will all join the legions that return to Yerushalayim.

## Emunah When We Do Not See Hashem

The prayer that expresses the individual character of a Yom Tov is Musaf. The Musaf prayer of Rosh Hashanah is divided into three sections: Malchius – accepting the sovereignty of Hashem, Zichronos - Remembrance, and Shofros.<sup>1</sup>

Each of the three sections is comprised of ten verses. The last verse of Malchius is Shema Yisrael, the ultimate declaration of Hashem's oneness.

When saying Shema, we cover our eyes and all we see is darkness. We express our belief that even if all seems black; we see no consistency between the tragic occurrences and the One Source of love, we nevertheless accept everything with loving humility. We steadfastly refuse to be plagued by doubts; we understand that we cannot comprehend and follow Hashem despite the pain of ambiguity.

The verse of Shema, unlike the other nine verses of Malchius, does not even contain the word 'Melech', King. We do not even see the King; yet, we declare his oneness.

## The Akeida – Emunah from a Distance

Hashem commanded Avraham to bring his son Yitzchak on the altar as a sacrifice. Avraham did as instructed, without questioning, and bound Yitzchak on the altar. As Avraham was about to slaughter Yitzchak, an angel called out and instructed him to stop. This episode is called The Akeida, which means binding. It is read on Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgment, to recall the merits of our forefathers.

The reading of the Akeida on Rosh Hashanah further expresses the message of the last verse of Malchius.<sup>2</sup>

Hashem had promised Avraham Avinu that Yitzchak would be the forbearer of the Jewish nation. Yitzchak had not yet had any children when Hashem commanded Avraham to bring him up on the altar. Avraham Avinu could have argued that the command contradicted the earlier promise. However, he did not. With blindfolded eyes, like a Jew who recites Shema, he followed Hashem's directive.

The difficulty of the Akeida was further compounded by Avraham Avinu's spiritual state. Avraham Avinu had spent a lifetime laboring spiritually, and had attained a very close connection to Hashem. However, during the Akeida, his perception of G-d was dulled by a feeling of being distanced from Him<sup>3</sup>. "וירא את המקום מרחוק", he perceived Hashem from the distance.

Despite his tremendous confusion, Avraham Avinu refused to relinquish his faith in Hashem. If he could not believe in Hashem through sublime perception, he would do so with the Emunah of a 'simple' Jew.

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<sup>1</sup> Rosh Hashana is also called Yom HaZikaron, the day of recall and reckoning. The Shofar calls attention to our merits.

<sup>2</sup> "והאלקים נסה את אברהם", Hashem tested Avraham Avinu (they both equal 861). ראש השנה is gematria the opening passage of the Akeida,

We each have our personal Mount Moriah to scale and our individual Yitzchaks we need to sacrifice. By withstanding the Akeida, Avraham fortified his descendants with the power to withstand any challenge of faith.<sup>3</sup>

During the Akeida - his tenth and last trial - Avraham Avinu taught the last generations how to close their eyes to blinding confusion and recite Shema Yisrael, the tenth verse of Malchius. We believe the king is here, even if we cannot find him.

### **Restraining Din - Harsh Judgment**

Why is this trial of Avraham referred to as Akeidas Yitzchak, the binding of Yitzchak? Avraham Avinu did many things; he built a Mizbe'ach, chopped wood, sharpened the slaughtering knife, and above all, he was prepared to slaughter his son. What was the significance of tying Yitzchak?

Each of the patriarchs served Hashem through a different attribute; Avraham through Chesed – Loving-Kindness, Yitzchak through Din – Strict Justice, and Yaakov through Rachamim - Compassion. By tying Yitzchak, Avraham restrained the attribute of Din.<sup>4</sup>

Every Rosh Hashanah, Yitzchak's attribute of Din is awakened and we are then judged. Therefore, we blow the Shofar, the horn of a ram, and evoke the merit of the Akeida, when a ram was sacrificed instead of Yitzchak. By recalling the Akeida when Din was restrained, the harshness of the judgment of Rosh Hashana is softened.

### **Tempering Judgment with the Shofar**

We blow three types of blasts with the Shofar; a teruah and shevarim which are broken up sounds, and a tekiah which is one whole blast. Teruah and shevarim correspond to the harsh Din of Yitzchak whose intensity can shatter all who come in contact with it. A tekiah, which corresponds to Avraham and Yaakov – Chesed and Rachamim - is blown prior and following each Teruah or Shevarim to reduce their harshness.

The Torah commands us to blow Shofar on Rosh Hashana, "יום תרועה יהיה לכם". This is gematria "ויעקד את יצחק בנו" (857), Avraham bound Yitzchak, his son (they both equal 857). By blowing the Shofar in this manner we restrain the attribute of Din.

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<sup>3</sup> On the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah we read the parsha of "אתם נצבים", which can be interpreted to mean, you have withstood the travails of exile. How? Through the Emunah that Avraham Avinu planted in you at the Akeida. Therefore, "אתם נצבים היום" is gematria "אל ארץ המורה", Hashem's command to Avraham to ascend Mount Moriah and bring Yitzchak up on the altar (they both equal 694).

<sup>4</sup> The right side corresponds to Chesed and the left to Din. Therefore, we bind the straps of tefillin around the left arm and tie the left shoe first. Thereby, we restrain the attribute of Din, as Avraham did by the Akeida.

## The Difference Between the Two Days of Rosh Hashanah

On the first day of Rosh Hashanah a 'דינא קשיא', harsh judgment, reigns. On the second day this Din is eased, and a 'דינא רפיא', lenient judgment, is present.<sup>5</sup>

The Satmar Rebbe would say after the Musaf of the first day of Rosh Hashanah, "The most difficult [hurdle] is already behind us." The 'דינא קשיא' of the first day had already been softened with the Shofar and the second day would be much easier than the first.

On the first day of Rosh Hashanah we read about the birth of Yitzchak, which represents the appearance of Din. On the second day we read the Akeida when the Din of Yitzchak was restrained.

Once the Din of Yitzchak was curbed, there was a possibility for Rivka – who exemplified Chesed - to emerge. Therefore, upon returning from the Akeida, Avraham was immediately informed that Rivka had been born. The Judgment of the second day is further softened by the presence of Rivka.

The two days of Rosh Hashana are halachically considered as into one long day, a 'יומא אריכתא'. The first day is sweetened by its union with the second day just as Yitzchak's attribute of Din was sweetened by his marriage to Rivka.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hashem created the world with ten utterances ('אבות ריש פרק ה'). In the chronicles of creation, we find only nine utterances through which Hashem created the world. The Gemara counts Bereishis as the first utterance while the Zohar counts the utterance with which Hashem created the woman as the tenth.

Initially, Hashem intended to create the world with the attribute of Din. When he saw that the world cannot exist with Din alone, he linked Rachamim to Din. (רש"י בראשית א:א)

The story of creation is told in the Parsha of Bereshis two times. In the first account of creation, Hashem is referred to as 'Elokim', G-d of Din. In the Second account of creation in which the woman's creation is described, Elokim is accompanied by Hashem's name of Chessed - Yud, Keh, Vav, Keh. Din is mitigated by Chesed.

If we consider the utterance with which the help-mate of man was created as the tenth utterance, then we have a combination of Chesed and Din in the chronicles of creation.

The only marriage discussed in detail in the Torah is that of Yitzchak and Rivka. From there we learn everything we need to know about searching for, meeting, and marrying one's intended.

Rivka was the Chesed that seasoned the Din of Yitzchak. The utterance through which Din was diluted with Chesed was the one with which the bride – which Rivka symbolizes - was created.

The Zohar (פקודי רנ"ז) states: There is no Judgment that has no kindness therein... Yitzchak and Rivka are like one. [Yitzchak] is Judgment and [Rivkah] is Chesed. Rivka, who sweetened the Din of Yitzchak, was created with the utterance that sweetened Din with Chesed.

"יומא אריכתא" is gematria "אעשה לו עזר", I will create a helpmate of man – who Rivka symbolizes (they both equal 689). Just as the second day of Rosh Hashana combines with the first to mitigate its harshness Rivka unites with Yitzchak to season his Din.

There are ten days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur. These are the days when the new year is created and each one corresponds to a different one of the Ten Utterances through which the world was created. Yom Kippur corresponds to the tenth utterance, which created the bride.

Therefore, in the beginning of the First Temple Era, when the Jewish People were on a very lofty spiritual level, Yom Kippur was a day of when marriages were arranged. (This practice was discontinued when the Jewish people were no longer on the level to do this with the purely spiritual intentions of mirroring the Divine marriage of Hashem with the Jewish people.)

## The Jewish People, Ready for Rosh Hashana

The Jewish People are compared to the bride of Hashem. During the **שבעה שבועות** they prepared for Rosh Hashanah and are now ready for their lofty union with G-d.

In this week's Haftora, the Jewish People are portrayed as a bride who dons her wedding garments. Hashem is described as **כמוש חתן על כלה** - the Groom rejoicing with His bride, the Jewish people.

**לה' אדני - ה' בשופר יתקע** is gematria "משוש חתן על כלה", Hashem will blow the Shofar of Mashiach (they both equal 1259). Hashem will truly rejoice with His bride with the blowing of the horn that will herald Mashiach's arrival. This shofar is none other than the horn of the ram that Avraham sacrificed at the Akeida.

Through the Akeida, Avraham infused the last generation with the ability to believe in Hashem even during the darkest moments. The Emunah of the last generation will serve as the catalyst for the final redemption.

### You Make the Difference on Rosh Hashanah

The Zohar teaches that even if only one congregation completely repents, the Zohar states, the entire Jewish nation can merit the redemption. Each congregation must see themselves as the one which can bring the final redemption.

The Kedushas Levi advises that we not confuse the insignificant with the essential on Rosh Hashanah. The prayer of 'Pesukei D'Zimra' and the regular Shacharis are compared to the mainstay of a meal. The extra piyutim (liturgy) are like the dessert; they enhance the meal greatly, but are not appreciated on an empty stomach.

Rushing through the regular prayers and focusing only on the piyutim is like serving a massive helping of icing on a thin sliver of cake.

Every word of prayer is extraordinary on Rosh Hashanah. Take advantage.

**"בספר חיים ברכה ושלוש ופרנסה טובה וגזירות טובות ישועות ונחמות נזכר ונכתב לפניך אנחנו וכל עמך בית ישראל לחיים טובים ולשלום."**

'In the book of blessings, peace, a good livelihood, good edicts, salvation and consolation, may we be remembered and inscribed before You – ourselves and the entire Jewish people – for a good life and for peace.'

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<sup>א</sup> ישעיה מ:א

<sup>ב</sup> ישעיה מ:כו

<sup>ג</sup> חבקוק ב:ד

<sup>ד</sup> סוף מסכת מכות

<sup>ה</sup> זוהר

<sup>ו</sup> בראשית כב:ד

<sup>ז</sup> במדבר כט:א

<sup>ח</sup> בראשית כא:ה

<sup>ט</sup> זוהר