

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת נצבים-וילך

**אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם כל
איש ישראל**

“You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d: the heads of your tribes, your elders and your officers - all the men of Israel” (29:9)

The literal translation of "נצבים" means to stand. Moshe told the people that they were "standing together." The Midrash Tanchuma comments that the only way in which the Jewish nation can truly stand and flourish is if it stands together and united. This is the key to success. The Alter from Kelm explained that an individual can make himself into a group by becoming an activist and a community person. In this way, people rely upon him and he becomes a mini-tzibbur. This is important to consider with the imminent arrival of Rosh Hashana. Chazal tell us that a community has more merit than the individual because of the combined qualities of its members. By becoming a key member of the community, one adds the merit of the tzibbur to his own account and has special merit on the Yom HaDin.

During the blood libels in Kiev in the early 1900's, popularly known as the Beilis Trial, the Christians attempted to convict the Jews, using the saying of Chazal, “אתם אדם קרויים אדם ואין אומות העולם קרויים אדם,” “You are called ‘man’ and the gentiles are not called ‘man,’” to show that Jews do not consider gentiles “man,” and thus had no qualms about murdering a Christian child. R' Meir Shapiro sent an answer to the court to clarify the true meaning of this statement. He wrote that Chazal are explaining that we have a sense of unity, whereas the gentiles do not. That is why we are called “אדם,” the singular word for man, while the gentiles are called “אנשים,” the plural form, because they lack a sense of unity. He pointed to the worldwide response from Jews to the Kiev case as an example of this Jewish sense of unity. This sense of community that Jews feel for one another, regardless of physical distance from one another, is one of the features that distinguishes Jews from the other nations of the world. (For more information on the Beilis Trial, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menahem_Mendel_Beilis)

The Or HaChayim writes that "נצבים" can also mean "appointed." Moshe told the people that they were all appointed to have a responsibility toward one another. As the Jews prepared for their upcoming entrance into Eretz Yisrael, they accepted a responsibility for everyone else's spiritual and physical welfare. Every single Jew is appointed to watch out for his fellow Jews as well as himself. One should share his knowledge, skills and abilities with others. If someone sees another person doing something wrong, he should not stand by idly. Rather, he must protest and attempt to correct his fellow's mistake. Obviously, this must be done in an appropriate way. He should approach the person in a pleasant manner and speak nicely to him. However, Chazal tell us that one must rebuke the other person up to the point where the recipient

is going to hurt him. Only then, when it is obvious that any reproach will not succeed, is a person exempt from this obligation.

Not only must a person be sure to give rebuke if it is done in the proper way, he must also only give rebuke at a proper time. We see this from another posuk in the parsha. Parshas Vayeilech begins by saying that "Moshe went." Why does the posuk write these seemingly extra words? The answer is that the Torah is indicating that it was the day of Moshe's death and he was about to "go." The purpose of the parsha beginning with this notification is to explain the rebuke that follows. Moshe was rebuking them immediately before his death just as Yaakov did. What is the purpose of rebuke given right before one's death. Rashi explains that Yaakov did this because he was afraid to rebuke Reuven for moving Yaakov's bed for fear that he would have gone over to Eisav. If the goal of the rebuke is to improve the other person, then it is best if done at the proper time. The fact that Moshe is "going" is the introduction to the rebuke that follows. Rebuke has to be done properly. The Rambam has a full set of guidelines for how to rebuke someone, such as telling him one-to-one and telling him nicely. In fact, the word for rebuke, "הוכיח," also means "to show." Rebuke is not about yelling at the person but about showing him where he has gone wrong and what he can do to improve.

הנסתרת לה' אלקינו והנגלת לנו ולבנינו עד עולם לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת

"The hidden things are for Hashem, our G-d, but the revealed things are for us and for our children forever, to carry out all the words of this Torah" (29:28)

Rabbeinu Bachya says in the name of the Rambam that there are many secrets of the Torah. There are many mitzvos whose reasons are hidden from us. These hidden reasons do indeed exist, but they are known only to Hashem. This does not mean that they are baseless, but that there are reasons which we are not privy to. This fact does not weaken our obligation to actually fulfill these commandments. What is revealed to us, the actual mitzvah, we must do, regardless of whether we understand its reasons or not. Often we go through times when we don't understand certain aspects of life. Our lack of understanding does not mean that it has no reason. We must continue forward anyway and trust in Hashem and continue to do our part to fulfill that which has been revealed to us.

ושבת עד ה' אלקיך ושמעת בקלו ככל אשר אנכי מצוך היום וּבניך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך

"You will return until Hashem, your G-d, and listen to his voice, according to everything that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and all your soul" (30:2)

Ramban explains that this posuk regarding repentance contains two points. It teaches that one is commanded to repent from his sins. The second point is that the Torah clearly promises that there will come a time when many people will realize the truth and will return to Hashem through repentance. We should never give up hope that

we have sunk too low. The Torah promises that teshuva is attainable and will be accomplished.

R' Samson Raphael Hirsch comments that the posuk says that the people will return "until" Hashem and reach a high level of closeness to Hashem. This is a guarantee that if one puts the proper effort into his repentance, it will definitely be seen by Hashem. Chazal tell us that teshuva reaches all the way until Hashem's Throne of Glory. People who do teshuva are on a higher level than those who were always righteous. They have stared the temptation of sin in the face and have resisted. Those who have always been righteous have never faced that desire. Teshuva presents an opportunity for a person to have direct access to Hashem.

The power of teshuva is multiplied during the Aseres Yemei Teshuva, between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. During these days, Hashem is even closer to us than usual and teshuva becomes even easier to accomplish. One just has to start the ball rolling and full repentance will follow. Chazal tell us that "if one opens up a hole the size of the point of a needle, Hashem will expand it into the size of a large entrance hall." We should take advantage of the opportunity that these days present us with and use them to atone for our wrongdoings. If we just make that first move, Hashem will carry us the rest of the way.

Rabbi Friedman points out that the word "ושבת," "and you will return," contains within it the word Shabbos. This hints to us that Shabbos is a way to lead a person to teshuva. When a person experiences Shabbos and feels its atmosphere, it leads them to teshuva. Keeping Shabbos cannot change everything but it can be the spark that lights the fire of inspiration that sets people on the right path. We find that many ba'alei teshuva started their journey back to Torah and mitzvos after experiencing a Shabbos.

הקהל את העם האנשים והנשים והטף וגרך אשר בשעריך למען ישמעו ולמען ילמדו ויראו את ה' אלקיכם ושמרו לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת
“Gather together the people - the men and the women and the children and your stranger who is in your cities - so that they will hear and so that they will learn, and they shall fear Hashem, your G-d, and be careful to perform all the words of this Torah” (31:12)

הקהל was done on Succos every seven years, in the year after Shemitta. Why was it done specifically in the year after Shemitta and not at any other time? The Meshech Chochmah explains that after a year off, the farmers are ready and raring to get back in the field to plant and plow and go back to work. That is the time at which there must be a public reading of the Torah, to strengthen them in their Avodas Hashem specifically at that juncture in time. This is why they would read Sefer Devarim, which is full of moral lessons and rebuke. The same can be said for college students who are focusing on their studies. It is always important to go back and revisit the true calling of a Jew, the messages contained in the Torah.

The Akeidas Yitzchak explains that after a year off from working and dedicating a year to spiritual growth is the time when one is in his purest state and is ready to absorb the messages of the Torah and to reaffirm his commitment to it. Preparation

makes the acceptance much easier. This preparation followed by the commitment to the Torah will carry them over for the next six years until the next Shemitta. Similarly, it is beneficial if a person takes a few minutes before davening to learn Torah or to say some Tehillim. This preparation puts the person in a frame of mind to have more concentration during davening.

Why is הקהל performed on Sukkos and not at any other time of the year? In order to answer this question, R' Moshe Feinstein asks a different question about the mitzvah of sukkah. He mentions the dispute in the Gemara regarding whether the mitzvah to sit in a sukkah for seven days commemorates the ענני הכבוד, the special clouds of protection in the desert, or the actual huts that the Jews lived in during their sojourn in the wilderness. He says that it makes sense to say that we are commemorating the clouds because then we are celebrating a miracle, but if we are commemorating the actual huts, what is so special about them that they deserve a holiday? Why do we have to relive their way of life in the desert? He also questions the "הנני מוכן ומזומן" prayer that some people say before sitting in the sukkah which states that all of the 613 mitzvos are tied to the mitzvah of sukkah. How is this so? He answers that the sukkah must be a temporary dwelling because the Jewish dwellings in the desert were temporary as they were always on the go. This helped them understand that this world is a transient one. This idea tends to get lost in the permanence of our lives. To bring it back, we spend a week in the sukkah to relive their temporary lifestyle. This helps us remember that we are only passing through this world for a short period of time. This is the reason why all of the 613 mitzvos are tied to the mitzvah of sukkah because if we understand that the world is fleeting, it is automatic that one will try to do all of the mitzvos as soon as possible. This is why הקהל had to be done on Sukkos. It is only fitting that the renewal of the commitment to Torah and mitzvos be done at a time of year when we remind ourselves of the need to do all the mitzvos we can.

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