



PARSHOT NITZAVIM-VAYELECH

THE BOOK OF THE INTERMEDIATES

Parshat Nitzavim is read every year on the Shabbat preceding Rosh Hashanah. This is the *Shabbat* on which we would have blessed the month of *Tishrei*, the seventh month that is filled with goodness but which is blessed by God Himself as we read in the Torah “You stand today, all of you...”

The connection between *parshat Nitzavim* and *Rosh Hashanah* can be learned from the word “today,” in the verse, “You stand today” and from this word’s appearance in connection with Rosh Hashanah at the beginning of the Book of Job. Job begins with five verses that set the background for the story that follows. Then we read, “It was on that day that the angels presented themselves before God and the adversary was among them.” According to both the *Targum* and *Rashi* “that day” (הַיּוֹם) refers to *Rosh Hashanah*. Similarly, Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra states,

...The word “that day” can be identified with *Rosh Hashanah* because that is the day on which the whole world passes before the Divine Presence like a flock of sheep. Or, it may have been the particular day on which Job alone was judged and this I cannot expound on. Or, this word may designate the time frame during which this came to pass, as in the verse, “That day came to pass and Elisha...”

The three possibilities for interpreting the word ‘that day’ (הַיּוֹם) brought by the Ibn Ezra correspond to the three dimensions of reality: Worlds, Souls, and Divinity, in reverse order. Let us explain the correspondence.

Identifying “that day” with Rosh Hashanah corresponds with Divinity because Rosh Hashanah is the day on which all earthly creatures crown God as the King of the universe. In this sense, *Rosh Hashanah* is a day about the Divine. Adam was created on this day, and immediately subjected himself and all of creation to God’s sovereignty and said, “Come let us bow and kneel, let us give praise before our Maker.”

Identifying “that day” with Job’s special day of judgment reveals the dimension of Souls. Each individual’s day of judgment is his or her birthday, the day that is their personal *Rosh Hashanah* because on this day they grow a year older. It is on one’s birthday that one’s *mazal* for the coming year is strongest.

The third option of identifying “that day” as a simple temporal designator reflects the dimension of Worlds, where we feel the passage of time.

Now that we know that Job is the source of the description of *Rosh Hashanah* as the Day of Judgment for all creatures, the question presents itself: Why would we learn such an important fact about the essence of *Rosh Hashanah* only apropos the story of Job? Should we not expect such a basic fact to be stated explicitly in the Torah?

The answer is that Moshe Rabbeinu wrote three books: the Torah, Job, and the description of Balam’s prophecies in the Torah.³ These three books correspond to the three possible states of a human being: righteous (a *tzadik*), intermediate (a *beinoni*), and wicked (a *rasha*). The sages tell us that on Rosh Hashanah the Almighty opens three: the book of the righteous, of the intermediaries, and of the wicked.⁴ Those individuals who are righteous are immediately signed and sealed for a good year; those who are wicked are immediately signed and sealed for a year of punishment. But, the intermediaries remain in review until *Yom Kipur*, when they are signed as per the final outcome of their trial.

Based on the Tanya, almost all Jews are (potentially) intermediaries (*beinonim*), meaning that they cannot completely vanquish their inclination for that which is negative and are constantly fighting it in order to lead a good and upright life. It follows therefore that Job is the original intermediary. Moses’ depiction of Job is of a person locked in constant existential struggle with himself and with God’s Providence, constantly questioning both and never arriving at a satisfying conclusion, one way or the other. Even before we are told of Job’s suffering and trial we learn that:

When the festivities had run their course, Job would send and have them purified. Early in the morning he would sacrifice a burnt offering for each of them, thinking, “Perhaps they [my children] have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.” This was Job’s custom day by day.

Like the *beinoni* (the intermediate) that he epitomizes, Job is constantly aware of the ease with which a person can slip and act improperly and therefore remains forever vigilante against sin. But, even more so, Job, like the *beinoni* as described in the

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Tanya, is super-sensitive to the sins of the heart, the battleground on which the war against the evil inclination is fought.

In any case, we have found that *Rosh Hashanah* is the Day of Judgment primarily for those who are intermediates (which is practically everyone). And

thus, the essential essence of *Rosh Hashanah* as a day of judgment is gleaned from the description of Job, Moshe Rabbeinu's book on the existential struggles of the intermediate (the beinoni).

(based on the Daily *Dvar Torah* for *Nitzavim*, 5768).

THE REDEMPTION GROWS NEARER...

The Talmud recounts that Rabbi Yehudah ben Levi asked the Mashiach when he would come and the Mashiach replied, "Today!" In his reply—"today"—the Mashiach included all of the "today"s found in the Bible and especially the instance found in the beginning of our parshah, "You stand today, all of you...." In merit of the unity exhibited between all ten spiritual levels of the souls of the Jewish people, the redemption will indeed come today!

(based on the Daily *Dvar Torah* for *Nitzavim*, 5768)

HARAV GINSBURGH IN NORTH AMERICA

Harav Ginsburgh continues his lecture tour in the US. He will be traveling to Toronto on Sunday and we wish him success in spreading the wellsprings of the Torah.

Crown Heights, NY: Motzai Shabbos Pre-Selichos Lecture, September 12 / 23 Elul at 9:45pm ♦ United Lubavitcher Yesiva (570 Crown Street, Corner of Albany) ♦ "Forgiving: Arousal from Below" ♦ Yonason Gordon, email: innerstudy@gmail.com 718-773-2147 ♦ Admission: \$15

Toronto: Date: Sunday-Monday, September 13-14 / 24-25 Elul

Great Neck, NY: Tuesday, September 15 / 26 Elul at 7:30pm ♦ Chabad of Great Neck, 400 East Shore Road, Great Neck, NY 11024 ♦ "New Trends in Psychology from the Perspective of Kabbalah" ♦ 516-487-4554

Mazal Tov, Mazal Tov to our dear friend, Moshe Dov Ber Eidelson and his wife Chen on the birth of their firstborn son this Thursday, the 21st of Elul.

May they merit to bring him into Abraham's covenant in the proper time and to raise him with happiness and health in a loving Chassidic atmosphere.