

Seventh Elul Shiur

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(Notes taken during the shiur by Moshe Genuth. Not reviewed by Harav Ginsburgh)

A good evening. We are a few days before Rosh Hashanah. May it be a year of light, of the light of Mashiach of the complete redemption, individually and collectively.

Every year the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah we read parashat Nitzavim. The parshah begins with 10 parts of the Jewish people, corresponding to the 10 sefirot. But, the first word, נצב, is connected to malchut, kingdom, because the king is נצב. Every Jew is a king or the son of a king. The letter in the middle, the tzadik (צ) is equal to “king” (מלך) and the rest of the letters spell בן, son.

In this merit, we stand before Hashem our God. Later it says, למען הקימך היום לו לעם והוא יהיה לך לאלקים. Even it says, לו לעם, for Him a people, Rashi writes that this “for Him” (לו) means “before Him.” This is like למען יקימך לו היום לעם, where He will raise you before Him. Many times it says that we are standing before Hashem, like in the verse, אשר ישנו עמנו פה. היום לפני ה' אלקיכם. All the generations stand before Hashem and all the coming generations to, all stand and pass before God in a covenant, and this is how we receive the new year. As the Zohar says that the final parashot of the book of Devarim all allude to the great day of the New Year, Rosh Hashanah—every time it mentions “the day” (היום), “today.”

The 10 parts of the Jewish people enumerated in the first and second verses, 5 in each verse. This is like in Sefer Yetzirah where it says that the sefirot are 5 facing 5. The coming year, תשע"ג, 773, actually equals this phrase “five facing five” (חמש כנגד חמש). The first verse contains the higher parts of the people and the second the simple Jews, the Jews of the Ba'al Shem Tov. The last, the water gatherers, שואבי מימך, were the ones the BST loved the most. Whenever we see such a Jew we should say that the BST says that water is a sign of blessing. The final level, the water gatherers, they correspond to the malchut, kingdom. The redemption will come in their merit.

Since we're talking about the water gatherers, we have to say that water alludes to Torah, so these people are always drawing Torah. The person who is a wood-chopper (חוטב עציך), he is as explained by the Alter Rebbe, someone who is chopping advice (עצה). To chop advice means to take it apart, analyze it, to see whether it is something good or not. Likewise the water that needs to be drawn is the negative water in the soul, the water that grows all negative forms of pleasure. These types of waters have to be drawn out and spilled. Apparently the simple Jew is always in a dilemma about how these two descriptions apply to him. Does it mean that I am constantly drawing good water, the water of Torah down, or should I concentrate on getting rid of the negative water.

After the first two verses, the next two verses also form a unit. This year, נצבים וילך, are read separately, so the first 6 verses form the first two aliyot. The purpose of the first two verses enumerating the 10 levels of the Jewish people is that these 10 levels pass before God in a covenant, and this covenant occurs on Rosh Hashanah. RH in general is connected with a covenant. As we are making God our king on RH we are also entering into a new covenant with him. We have to understand what the nature of this covenant is. The fourth verse, which begins the second aliyah describes the nature of this

covenant: To make you, today, for Him into a people. And as Rashi says, to sustain you as a people before Him. The next two verses, I am not making this covenant with you alone—we are altogether before Hashem on RH, but it is not with us alone, but rather, with all those standing before God today, and all those who are not with us today. These are the first six verses of the parashah, which again divide into 3 sets of two verses. The way to understand this division is based on Sefer Yetzirah, where the three dimensions of reality are world, year, and psyche (עולם שנה נפש). RH is the beginning of the year. The first moment of RH is a recollection of the first moment of the birth of mankind, with the creation of Adam. But, it is also a recollection of the first moment of creation itself. We enter into the first moment of time. What this means in the psyche is that time is based on past, present, and future. In Hebrew one of the synonyms for “present” is “standing” (עומדים). Another synonym is “intermediate” (בינוני). This is one of the explanations for why the Tanya is called the book of intermediates, because the Alter Rebbe is telling us all to live in the present, not in the past and not in the future. The tzadik might be living in the future, the wicked person, עבריין, is stuck in the past, the past simply won't let him go. To be free is to live in the present.

In these six verses, the word “today” is mentioned five times. אתם נצבים היום.... אשר ה' אלקיכם ברת אתך היום... למען הקים אותך היום לו לעם... אשר ישנו פה עמנו עומד היום... ואת אשר איננו עמנו פה היום. The last verse contains two instances of “today.” The word today refers to the present, like in Yiddish where today is translated as “heint” which means “now.” Like wanting Mashiach now, at this moment, this is the consciousness of the intermediate who wants all the good promises in the Torah, now. This is like the famous story in the Talmud that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi met the Mashiach and asked him, When are you coming? The Mashiach answered: Today. When he didn't come that day, he complained before Eliyahu Hanavi who told him that he was referring to the verse, If you listen to his voice, today he will come. When is the best time to listen to a voice on RH? It is when the shofar is blowing. You just listen to the voice, the sound of the shofar. The word Shofar means “improve your conduct” (שפרו מעשיכם). Every person knows exactly what is missing from his conduct and can improve it.

Everything that is complete and consummate is inter-inclusive (התכללות). Since we want Mashiach now at this very moment, in the present moment, then we have to realize that the present is just a fleeting second. The salvation of Hashem comes within a fleeting moment (בהרף עין). If a person is stuck in the past, he is stuck in what is not anymore, in nothingness. The future is yet to be, and all there is is the present moment, which is a fleeting second. So in reality, everything is included within the present moment. This is how to understand the first 6 verses of the parashah which are divided into 2, 2, and 2. The first 2 verses refer to the aspect of the past in the present. The action, the next 2 verses, that is the present within the present. The final 2 verses are the future of the present, the future that is already in the present. This last aspect is the easiest to understand so we'll begin with it.

The last 2 verses discuss those who are here today and all those that are not here today, the coming generations. They too should be included in this covenant. So the point is to reveal the future in the present. For the Almighty, the future is just as present

as the present and is included in the present. So including all the future in the present, is the topic of the final two verses. There is no other such example of including the future in the present in the Torah. Now we can go back to understand the first 4 verses. The first two are like the impression left upon the present by the past. Between the past and the present there is a contraction (צמצום), but even after the contraction the residue, the impression of the past remains intact. The first two verses begin with an inclusive clause: you are all standing here today before Hashem, but then it differentiates between the different levels of Jews. What does it mean that there are different levels, that one Jew is a head, one is the prince of a tribe, there is a wise elder, there is an enforcer of the law, then all the other older Jews. What does this mean? First of all, when standing before Hashem, that all the levels I may feel that I have attained, that I have, these are really just a residue of the past. But, I myself am something entirely different. All that defines me is the past. In the moment of the true present, I have no definition, I am like a newborn. The true present, the present within the present is the two verses that speak of the salvation, of the redemption, which is on RH to make with God a covenant. All that I have to do is to make this covenant in order to become a people, today, before Him. To sustain us before Him as a people. These are the verses of the act that is happening in the present, this is what God wants from me this very moment. This is the secret of God. This is the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. Then God says that all the future is making this covenant with you at this moment. This is the first idea about this parashah, the parashah that prepares us for a good and sweet year. We must enter all three aspects of the present. There is a person who feels that he is a head of the Jewish people. That is only the past. If he wants to continue being a head, he has to do something new this very moment. The point is to feel that apart from the present moment, there is nothing else. All of Mashiach, all of the redemption is all within the present moment. Apart from the present moment there is no Mashiach, there is no redemption. This is the first point.

What is Rosh Hashanah? The first thing is that we accept God's reign over us. In order to appoint a king from below, we have to nullify ourselves before the king, as explained in Chassidut. We have to accept his reign willfully. It cannot be coerced. ומלכותו ברצון קבלו עליהם. We have to come submissively. But, incredibly it says in Chassidut that the secret of what is happening on Rosh Hashanah is to give God back the will to be a King once again. It is to awaken God's essential greatness. It says that only the Jewish people can do this, not because they come bowing down before the King, but because the Jewish people have a part in God Himself, and every Jewish soul has a point of essential nullification (not like a people that comes and submissively bows down before the king), where it is not even relevant to speak of accepting the yoke of Heaven. Only when we reveal this essential nullification within us, is the Almighty's essential greatness awakened. This needs to be meditated upon a great deal.

It is explained in Chassidut that every true king, like King David, to whom God promises an eternal reign through he and his house, then in that king certainly the future exists in the present. On the one hand, such a king is lowly, והייתי שפל בעיני, "I am a worm, not a man." Avraham said that he is like dust and ashes. Both of them describe their self as אנכי, the exalted I, not with the word "I" (אני). What is the difference between

אני and אני? The letter kaf refers to the crown (כתר). How can it be that when describing themselves as so lowly, both Abraham and David use the exalted I? We have to say that there is no contradiction between the exaltation of the I in holiness and the feeling of self-lowliness. In fact, not only do they not contradict, they depend on one another. A person who is unrectified, for him his I contradicts a feeling of lowliness. But, for a rectified individual one awakens the other. It says that the true king, the king of holiness has three traits. The first is that in spite of his extreme variations within himself, from one extreme to another, he is completely balanced. So on the one hand he is very lowly before God, on the other, he is essentially lofty relative to his people. He himself is essentially lowly, but the garments of kingship make him lofty above his people. How can he contain these two extremes: being the lowest in his heart, yet the highest relative to others? It says that the king has a kind of pendulum that swings from one extreme to another. This pendulum is not something he can experience. The main thing to meditate upon on RH is that like Hashem's self exaltedness, so I have the same. To appoint God, like in everything else, I have to be like Hashem. As it says in the previous parashah, that we should follow God's path, by mimicking Him. So if the main trait Hashem has is that He has essential greatness, then I need to have this too.

One of the things said about Hashem is that He is the knower, He is what is being known, and He is also the act of knowing, the energy that is passing between the knower and the known, the דעה, that too is He Himself. Can a man mimic this? The Rambam says that no. By God these are all one thing. But, according to the inner dimension of the Torah, everything that is in God is also in me, this is my essential character. So if I want to appoint God as king, I too have to be the appointer, the appointed, and the act of appointing. So I have to find in myself that point that is worthy of being appointed king. Exactly what this is is רוממות עצמית, essential loftiness. It is not about feeling superior to anyone else, there is not sense of self or being there. Instead, this is the pendulum that swings between the high and low points. Like the moon that causes the ebb and the tides (which in Hebrew, equal one another, גאות = שפל). Like the moon, that changes, this pendulum has to be found.

From the point of view of the essential greatness, there is no reality at all. The kings that are not rectified, they feel themselves to exist very strongly. But, in holiness, there is no sense of self being. The essential loftiness is not in the world, it has no existence, so it cannot be found in reality. The Hebrew word for "reality" (מציאות) means "to be found." There are things that have no reality, they cannot be found. Like the resting place of Moshe Rabbeinu, which is nowhere to be found. There is essential loftiness, that each of us, but that has no reality, it cannot be found. If it did, it would be a very negative thing, it would be like the 7 kings of the World of Chaos that shattered and died. It's not enough to say that this is in the unconscious—because the unconscious, or the super-conscious (as we refer to it) is something that exists in reality. The part of the super-consciousness that cannot be found at all, that is the Unknowable head (רדל"א).

Now, as we said we have to both appoint God king and be the act of appointing and the one being appointed. To appoint in Hebrew, also means to give advice, as it says in the Book of Nechemiah, that we sat with the king as we was creating the world, we told

God, that in spite of all the dangers of creating a world, we gave him the advice that it was a good idea. To be able to give advice, we have to be with the king, עם המלך במלאכתו, ישבו שם. Before the blowing of the Shofar we read the 47th chapter of Tehilim (Psalms). There is tremendous tension in the air then. The chapter begins with the verse, כל העמים תקפו כף. All the nations of the world, enter into an agreement. There are 3 types of nations according to the commentaries. There is type of nation, which in Hebrew is cognate to hushed embers. These are entities that are far from the essence of the King. If they are too close to the King, then those who are close to him, like children, etc. cannot be the King's people. This is not the secret of the people on Rosh Hashanah.

There is a second explanation for what "people" here means. The Alter Rebbe brings this in Likutei Torah. He writes that people, עם, are people who are equal to the king. A king cannot be a king over animals. There might be a parliament that was decided upon by others, but it is not yet a people, because they are not like the king. The first people does not necessarily have to be Jews, but the second does. But, there is a third type of nation. They are not an עם but an עם, a "with." The one who is with the king, he is the king. You have to be עם, with, and even not a secondary interpretation, but the main interpretation. This is a nation that precedes the contraction and even before the will to create the worlds. All three levels of nation (עם) here, correspond to the three dimensions of Worlds, Souls, and Divinity. The first type is a people of Worlds. The second is about people who are like Him. The third is a people who are Divine themselves. When all these people in myself can make a covenant with God, that is the end. We have to discover all three levels in ourselves.

Taking the phrase, רוממות עצמית שאינו מציאות כלל, Essential loftiness that is not in reality at all. In God, we represent the fact that this essential loftiness is "not in reality at all." For me to realize this awakens God's essential loftiness, the first half of the phrase. Let's say this same idea with another way. To explain the difference between the two types of reality, the rectified and the unrectified, we say that the exalted state of the unrectified is that it is whole, while the exalted state of the rectification is that it feels imperfect and partial. This is very surprising, because we might think that in God's perfection, the experience is one of being whole. There is no greater wholeness. But, it is the opposite. That which is unrectified feels whole, that it doesn't need anything from anyone and that it doesn't need to give anything to anyone. In the language of the sages this is described as a person who says: Mine is mine, yours is yours. This was the phrase practiced in Sodom. It can be an intermediate state too, but that is when it is not extreme. But, if it is extreme, as it was in Sodom, it is destined to fall apart quickly.

Still, how can it be that in rectification, in holiness, the feeling is one of being incomplete? Rabbi Avraham Abulafia describes the experience of holiness to be one of "a whole and a half." It is a feeling that I need to complete myself (even though I am whole to myself) by either giving or receiving, because that is how we both will uncover our highest essence. We are like God's "half," the non-existent aspect of God. We are His nothingness. We, the Jewish people. This is what we have to uncover in order to awaken God's will to be king.

the Ten Commandments begin with Anochi, the fourth commandment is regarding the Shabbat. Everything is contained in the Ten Commandments. RH is included within the Shabbat, seemingly. But, actually it makes more sense that it is hinted to in the first commandment which describes God as He who took us out of Egypt. All the holidays are a recollection of the Exodus from Egypt, while the first word Anochi, alludes to Rosh Hashanah, the exalted I that we should reach on Rosh Hashanah. In Devarim Moshe describes the giving of the Torah as “אנכי עומד בין ה' וביניכם,” this exalted I of Moshe is the level that we need to reveal in each of us on RH, this exalted I that makes God want to be King over the world. If the first word, אנכי is RH, then what do the next words allude to, ה' אלקיך, Hashem your God? Anochi refers to the God's essential self, that is beyond all description. But, the Name Havayah, refers to the lights that emanate from God's essential self, and “your God” (אלקיך) refers to the vessels. The lights are a soul without body. So if אנכי is RH, then Havayah is of course Yom Kippur, where we are like a soul without vessels. On Yom Kippur, the High Priest would utter God's Name, Havayah ten times. We are like souls without a body, there is no presence for the body. Sukkot is the complete opposite, it is all about ושמחת בהגידך, you should be joyous in your holiday. There are more practical mitzvot on Sukkot than there are on any other day. The practical mitzvot are the vessels. They reveal our true nature, which is not revealed not on RH and not on YK. So the first three words of the Ten Commandments refer to the first three holidays of the year, the beginning of the year.

In the Torah, Rosh Hashanah is supposed to be only one day. But, we celebrate the covering of the moon two days, something that we see alluded to explicitly in the verse, יחינו מיומיים ביום השלישי יקימנו ונחיה לפניו. The two days in this verse allude to Rosh Hashanah and the third day, that refers to Yom Kippur. The Anochi is Rosh Hashanah, so there must be two types of Anochi, as it says, אנכי מי שאנכי, or in the haftarah, אנכי אנכי, I, I. What do these two Anochi refer to in light of what we've learnt tonight?

It says that the Kings essential loftiness has two descriptions. One verse says הוד מלכות, and one says, הדרת מלך. The crown that was placed on King Solomon, the crown given to him from Above by God, that is called הוד מלכות. As the Rebbe said many times, the king has to be crowned twice. Once from Above and once from below. What is the difference between them? The הוד מלכות is the inner aspect of the crown, that is what God crowns him with. But, what the people give the king, what they crown him with, is the הדרת מלך, as the verse says, ברוב עם הדרת מלך. This is the external aspect of the crown, of keter. These two phrases together הוד מלכות עליו ויתן עליו מלך and ויתן עליו מלך equal אנכי (81) times Havayah (26). So these two aspects of אנכי correspond to the 2 days of RH. The first day of RH is the inner aspect of the crown, when we have to be even a little higher in order to awaken God's aspect that crowns himself. But, on the second day, we crown God as our king ourselves. This is also the day on which we should pray that God crown the king below with His crown and then we will follow suit and crown him from below. Rosh Hashanah is connected with a congregation of Jews, Jews congregate (מתקבצים). This is specifically then on the second day. The first day is more individual and personal then.

Now we said that on Rosh Hashanah we make a covenant with God. It is explained in Chassidut, in a sichah from the Rebbe that there are two types of covenants that need to be made on Rosh Hashanah. He doesn't divide them into the first and second days, but this follows from what we explained. In parashat Ki Tavo every time that it says "today" it refers to RH. In the beginning of Nitzavim this is also the case, except that it doesn't say "this day" (היום הזה). This phrase does appear in a few other places in Torah and it refers to RH and to a covenant. What is the difference between the two phrases, היום and היום הזה. Every time that the Torah says, "this" היום הזה, they learn that "this" refers to Torah. The difference is that there is a covenant that God makes with the soul, called היום הזה, and a covenant He makes with the body, called היום. The word הזה, "this" alludes to Moshe Rabbeinu's clear prophecy which begins with the word, זה, "this." So just to say היום, is light, היום אור. Who sees clearly? The soul, the essence of the soul, which sat with God to advise Him before He created the world. There are two verses, כי עמך הסליחה למען תורא, For with you is forgiveness, so that You be feared. The other verse says, כי עמך מקור חיים באורך נראה אור. Here the עמך "with you" can be read as "your people." So the phrase "this day," היום הזה, refers to the soul. As long as this level of the soul is present, that's good. But, it can disappear, which is why a covenant must be made with the body too, and that covenant can never be concealed. The covenant referred to at the beginning of parashat Nitzavim, which is to sustain us, להקים אותך לו לעם, as His people, is the covenant that God makes with our lower reality, with out bodies. Both covenants are made on RH: the covenant of "this day" היום הזה, and the covenant of "today" היום. We can say that these two covenants correspond to the 2 days of RH. Every day is "today," but it divides into "this day," and "today." The first is the covenant with the soul, a revelation of the very essence, while the second is a covenant with the body, which even when there are very difficult times, is sustained. The whole purpose of a covenant is to remain connected in very difficult times. In Chassidut, the Selichot are to make peace with God. So that the peace be kept, the second day of Rosh Hashanah is needed, the covenant we make with God through the body.

Another gematria about this is that the value of "today" and "this day," היום היום הזה with Rosh Hashanah, ראש השנה equals 1000. A very complete number alluding to the 1000 lights given to Moshe Rabbeinu, and the 1000 lights of the redemption. May we merit that everything be manifest today, and right now.