

**Nitzavim in a Nutshell**  
(Deuteronomy 29:9–30:20)

The Parshah of Nitzavim includes some of the most fundamental principles of the Jewish faith:

The unity of Israel: "You stand today, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d: your heads, your tribes, your elders, your officers, and every Israelite man; your young ones, your wives, the stranger in your gate; from your wood-hewer to your water-drawer."

The future redemption: Moses warns of the exile and desolation of the Land that will result if Israel abandons G-d's laws, but then he prophesies that in the end, "You will return to the L-rd your G-d . . . If your outcasts shall be at the ends of the heavens, from there will the L-rd your G-d gather you . . . and bring you into the Land which your fathers have possessed."

The practicality of Torah: "For the mitzvah which I command you this day, it is not beyond you, nor is it remote from you. It is not in heaven . . . It is not across the sea . . . Rather, it is very close to you, in your mouth, in your heart, that you may do it."

Freedom of choice: "I have set before you life and goodness, and death and evil: in that I command you this day to love G-d, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments . . . Life and death I have set before you, blessing and curse. And you shall choose life." ❖

**Anshei Lubavitch Congregation**

Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

*Adult education:*

Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

*Youth Outreach:*

Rabbi Eli and Ruty Steinhauser

**Shabbos – Parshas Nitzavim**

**Erev Shabbos – Sep 27 – Elul 27**

Candle Lighting ..... 6:28 pm  
Mincha ..... 6:30 pm

**Shabbos Day – Sep 28 – Elul 28**

Tehillim Reading .....9:30 am  
Shacharis .....9:30 am\*  
Torah Reading .....10:35 am  
Rabbi Neubort's Drasha .....11:10 am  
Kiddush .....12:10 pm  
Gemara (2-31 Summit) ..... 5:30 pm  
Shiur & Shalosh Seudos ..... 5:25 pm  
Mincha ..... 6:25 pm  
Rabbi's Drasha ..... 6:50 pm  
Shabbos Ends ..... 7:24 pm

*\*Latest morning Shema is 9:46 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

**Weekday Schedule (not on a holiday):**

**Minyan**

Shacharis .....6:15 am  
Mincha ..... 1:45 pm  
Maariv ..... 9:15 pm

**Classes**

Chassidus, Mon-Fri .....5:55 am  
Halachah, Mon-Fri .....1:40 pm  
and at 9:25 pm  
Torah Studies..... Mon. 7-8:00 pm  
Tuesday Talmud ..... 9:30-10:00 pm

**Thank You to:**  
**Phil Kestenbaum**  
**for reading the Torah**  
**and to our**  
**Kiddush and Security**  
**Volunteers**

*This week's  
Kiddush is  
sponsored by  
Binyamin Rotem in  
honor of the birth of  
his granddaughter*

**תהילים**  
*Tehillim - Psalms*  
Join us this Shabbos morning  
September 28 at 8:00 am for  
Shabbos Mevorchim Tehillim.  
This week's Tehillim reading is  
dedicated to  
a refuah sh'laima  
for  
Shoshana Mirriam bas Mindel.

**Rosh Hashanah  
Schedule**  
**Sunday:**  
Shacharis at 8:00 am  
Minchah/ Maariv at 6:25  
**Monday and Tuesday**  
Shacharis at 9:30 am  
Minchah/ Maariv at 6:25

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201-254-9190.

**Halachic Zmanim**  
Shabbos, September 28  
Daylight Savings Time  
Earliest Tallis ..... 5:54 AM  
Latest Morning Shema .... 9:46 AM  
Earliest Mincha (Gedola) ..1:17 PM  
Plag Hamincha .....5:33 PM  
Earliest Evening Shema ....7:12 PM

## Chassidic Masters

### “On the Essence of Choice”

*Based on the teachings of  
the Lubavitcher Rebbe  
Courtesy of MeaningfulLife.com*

*You have chosen us from all the nations; You loved us and desired us. You raised us above all tongues and sanctified us through Your commandments... (Siddur, mussaf prayer for the festivals)*

*[Freedom of] choice has been granted to every man... This concept is a fundamental principle and a pillar of the Torah and its commandments (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 5:1)*

The concept of choice is central to the belief and philosophy of the Jew. Two of Judaism's most basic principles revolve around choice: G-d's choice of Israel as His chosen people, and the free choice that has been granted to man.

In this article, we shall examine the Lubavitcher Rebbe's unique conception of the dynamics of choice in both the human and supernal realms: as it is exercised in the mind and soul of man, and how these dynamics are paralleled in G-d's choice of the people of Israel.

#### Choice in Three Dimensions

Since, by definition, a choice is not coerced, it would seem that the word "free" in the phrase "free choice" is superfluous. But there are various degrees of freedom that a chooser may possess in making his choice.

All told, there are three levels of choice:

#### a) *Compelled choice*

One level of choice relates to the conventional, everyday usage of the term. We each make countless choices every day: Coffee or tea? Shall we paint the picket fence white or green? Should I take the job in New York or the one in Montana?

As long as no one is forcing your decision, yours can be said to be a "free choice". But are you truly choosing freely? Each of the options confronting you is armed with an entire array of qualities to sway your choice. The taste of coffee draws you to it, while your sense of decorum dictates tea, which everyone else is having. White will liven up your gloomy backyard but will also show the dirt sooner than the green. The pay in New York is higher but so is the crime rate.

You will weigh all the factors and make your decision. But have you chosen? Or have the chosen thing's qualities, together with elements of your upbringing, personality and past experiences, conspired to compel your choice? Ultimately, you chose what you did because there is something about it which made you need or want it. Even if the reasons for both options were equally compelling, the one that you did choose was chosen because of its particular qualities. You made a choice as to which set of influences to succumb to — hardly the epitome of freedom.

#### b) *Random choice*

But suppose that you are above it all. Suppose that nothing about these choices has the power to hold or sway you. That, to you, the taste of coffee and social niceties are equally irrelevant, and white and green are simply two cans of paint. That you are utterly immune to salary figures and the threats of the big city.

Since the advantages and shortcomings of both options are of no significance to you, you are in a position to make a free (i.e. non-influenced) choice: to select one of two (or more) options for no reason other than that that's the one you've chosen.

Nevertheless, this is still not the ultimate in choice and freedom. True, you are free of the attractions and rationalizations which ordinarily influence the choices of men. But how did you choose? By a mental throw of dice? By some totally arbitrary surge of will? The choice could have gone either way, correct? So where were you in all this? In what way have you exercised your freedom to choose? You have merely surrendered to something that is beyond you.

#### c) *Quintessential choice*

We seem to be in a catch-22 situation. Is there ever a free choice between A and B?

*(continued on next page)*

If you chose A for a reason, if there is something about its qualities that attracts you, then it is not really you who is doing the choosing — your choice is determined by its qualities and by your own biases and behavior patterns. And if you choose it for no reason, again you are not choosing, only serving as a pawn to the capricious turns of fate.

But what if your choice is determined by the very essence of what you are? What about the choice to live, the choice to be free, the choice to have a child? Certainly, these choices are motivated by a reason. But theirs is not an external reason, nor is it a reason that is related to your external self (i.e. your mind-set, your emotional make-up, your personality). The reason for these choices is you. For life is but the desire to be. And what is freedom if not the opportunity to realize one's most quintessential potentials? And what are children if not the continuity of self? The quintessence of your being is what dictates that you choose life, liberty and parenthood.

The fact that the outcome of these choices is determined makes them no less free. On the contrary: this is the ultimate proof of their freedom. Because when choice is truly free, when the quintessence of self asserts itself, then the other, anti-self option (death, enslavement, childlessness) is obviously rejected. In other words, we usually see the existence of more than one option as the hallmark of choice — "choice", in the conventional definition of the term, means the ability to choose between A and B.

But when it comes to the ultimate definition of choice, the very opposite is true. When your choice is free of all constraints and inhibitions, external or internal, there is no other option — any more than there is another you.

To summarize: On the first and lowest level of choice, our choices are determined by external factors — the qualities of the chosen thing and the mental and emotional baggage we lug through life. The only thing that makes this any sort of choice at all is the existence of more than one option: we can resist one set of influences to embrace another.

A second, higher level of choice is one that is free of compulsion — at least, there are no identifiable factors, conscious or otherwise, that influence our decision. Again, there are two or more options (if there weren't, it wouldn't be a choice). But the very fact that the choice can go either way indicates that, ultimately, it is not the person himself — that is, his singular essence — who is doing the choosing.

On the third, highest level of choice there is only one option: the course that represents the uninhibited choice of one's deepest self. The ultimate criterion of free choice is not "Is it determined?" but "What determines it?" Every choice is determined by something, be it a rational motive or an intuitive flash of no traceable origins. True choice is when one's course of action is determined by, and only by, the very quintessence of self.

### ***Three That Are One***

These three degrees of choice are actually three aspects of the same phenomenon. Often, we experience only the most external layer of our power to choose. But there are also points in our life in which this outer layer is peeled away and we are in touch with a deeper — and freer — dimension of our choice. Finally, there are those rare moments when our most deeply rooted drives assert themselves, effecting a decision that is the very core and quintessence of choice.

Let us take the example of a choice we make countless times, and in countless different ways, every day — the choice to live. No matter how difficult and tiresome the effort may become, we continue to elect life and survival.

As we generally experience it (if and when we think about it at all) this is firstly a choice in the most commonplace sense of the term. We are faced with two options: to live, or not to live (G-d forbid). On the one hand we have the reasons for life: its joys and rewards, our commitments to our loved ones, etc. On the other hand we have its burdens and heartaches. We decide that it is worth the effort. We have been swayed by the many compulsions for life.

But then there are those circumstances under which all the conventional reasons to live no longer apply.

***(continued on next page)***

When life and death, stripped bare of their advantages and faults, are seen as equally significant (or non-significant). Yet something inside us says "Live!" Why? There is no why, only the simple fact that a choice has been made — a choice free of all the motives which compel it in its lower, lesser incarnation.

On this level, we experience choice as a completely arbitrary throw of dice, which could just as easily have fallen on the other, negative side. The chooser can offer no reason, no explanation for his choice. "This is what I chose," is all he can say, this is what I have drawn from the lottery of choice.

In truth, these two experiences of choice are two perspectives on one reality. Also one who chooses life because of its positive qualities is, on a deeper level of self (--a level of self to which the life's benefits are irrelevant), really making a blind supra-rational choice. His "compelled choice" is but an expression of the arbitrary choice which transcends the external reasons for life.

Ultimately, however, both these dimensions of a person's choice are outgrowths of a third, even deeper dimension which lies at their core: choice as the uninhibited assertion of his quintessential self. A person experiences choice on this level when he recognizes that, ultimately, his desire for life is not caused by its particular benefits, nor is it the lot he has drawn from the blue yonder of arbitrary impulse.

It is an expression of his very "I": an expression of a definitive, unequivocal choice to project his being and potentials into the arena of physical existence.

So when we choose life in many little and ordinary ways every day, we are actually making this choice on three different levels. On the rational and emotional level, we choose life because of its rewards. On a deeper level of self, where such mundane considerations are irrelevant, it is a "blind" supra-rational choice. Simultaneously, the very core of our being is choosing life, and it is this very choice that is being reiterated by the more external layers of our self. ❖

## From Our Sages

**You stand upright this day, all of you, before the L-rd your G-d (Deuteronomy 29:9)**

"This day" is a reference to Rosh Hashanah, the day on which we all stand in judgment before G-d. (The Torah reading of Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah.)

-- (Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)

**It shall come to pass . . . (Deuteronomy 30:1-10)**

The events prophesied in this chapter are still destined to be fulfilled, as they had not yet been realized in the days of the the First Temple, nor in the days of the Second Temple; it is the sum of our comfort and our hope, and the cure for all our troubles.

-- (Abarbanel)

## Haftorah in a Nutshell – Nitzavim

*Isaiah 61:10-63:9*

This week's haftorah is the seventh and final installment of a series of seven "Haftarot of Consolation." These seven haftarot commence on the Shabbat following Tisha b'Av and continue until Rosh Hashanah.

The prophet begins on a high note, describing the great joy that we will experience with the Final Redemption, comparing it to the joy of a newly married couple.

Isaiah then declares his refusal to passively await the Redemption: "For Zion's sake I will not remain silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be still, until her righteousness emerges like shining light..." He implores the stones of Jerusalem not to be silent, day or night, until G-d restores Jerusalem and establishes it in glory.

The haftorah then recounts G-d's oath to eventually redeem Zion, when the Jews will praise G-d in Jerusalem. The haftorah also contains a description of the punishment G-d will mete out to Edom and the enemies of Israel.

Isaiah concludes with the famous statement:

*"In all [Israel's] afflictions, He, too, is afflicted, and the angel of His presence redeemed them..."*

Like a loving father who shares the pain of his child, G-d, too, shares the pain of His people, and awaits the redemption along with them. ❖

## What is Rosh Hashana?

**What:** It is the birthday of the universe, the day G-d created Adam and Eve, and it's celebrated as the head of the Jewish year.

**When:** The first two days of the Jewish new year, Tishrei 1 and 2, beginning at sundown on the eve of Tishrei 1. Rosh Hashanah 2019 begins at sundown on September 29 and continues through nightfall on October 1.

**How:** Candle lighting in the evenings, festive meals with sweet delicacies during the night and day, prayer services that include the sounding of the ram's horn (shofar) on both mornings, and desisting from creative work. See our calendar for details.

The Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah actually means "Head of the Year." Just like the head controls the body, our actions on Rosh Hashanah have a tremendous impact on the rest of the year.

As we read in the Rosh Hashanah prayers, each year on this day "all inhabitants of the world pass before G-d like a flock of sheep," and it is decreed in the heavenly court "who shall live, and who shall die ... who shall be impoverished and who shall be enriched; who shall fall and who shall rise."

It is a day of prayer, a time to ask the Almighty to grant us a year of peace, prosperity and blessing. But it is also a joyous day when we proclaim G-d King of the Universe. The Kabbalists teach that the continued existence of the universe depends on G-d's desire for a world, a desire that is renewed when we accept His kingship anew each year on Rosh Hashanah.

### What's It Called?

- The most common name for this holiday is Rosh Hashanah, the name used in the eponymous tractate of Talmud devoted to the holiday.
- The Torah refers to this day as Yom Teruah (Day of Shofar Blowing).
- In our prayers, we often call it Yom Hazikaron (Day of Remembrance) and Yom Hadin (Day of Judgement) since this is the day when G-d recalls all of His creations and determines their fate for the year ahead.
- Together with Yom Kippur (which follows 10 days later), it is part of the Yamim Nora'im (Days of Awe, or High Holidays).

### First Priority: Hear the Shofar

The central observance of Rosh Hashanah is the sounding of the shofar, the ram's horn, on both days of the holiday (except if the first day is Shabbat, in which case we blow the shofar only on the second day).

The first 30 blasts of the shofar are blown following the Torah reading during morning services, and as many as 70 additional are blown during (and immediately after) the Musaf service, adding up to 100 blasts over the course of the Rosh Hashanah morning services (some communities sound another round of 30 blasts after services as well). For someone who cannot come to synagogue, the shofar may be heard the rest of the day.

The shofar blowing contains a series of three types of blasts: tekiah, a long sob-like blast; shevarim, a series of three short wails; and teruah, at least nine piercing staccato bursts.

The blowing of the shofar represents the trumpet blast that is sounded at a king's coronation. Its plaintive cry also serves as a call to repentance. The shofar itself recalls the Binding of Isaac, an event that occurred on Rosh Hashanah in which a ram took Isaac's place as an offering to G-d.

### Other Rosh Hashanah Observances

**Greetings:** On the first night of Rosh Hashanah, wish a male, "Leshanah tovah tikatev vetichatem;" for a female say, "Leshanah tovah tikatevee vetichatemee" ("May you be inscribed and sealed for a good year"). At other times, wish them a "Gemar chatimah tovah" ("A good inscription and sealing [in the Book of Life]").

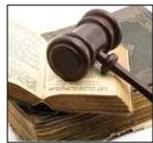
**Candles:** As with every major Jewish holiday, women and girls light candles on each evening of Rosh Hashanah and recite the appropriate blessings. On the second night, make sure to use an existing flame and think about a new fruit that you will be eating (or garment that you are wearing) while you say the Shehechyanu blessing.

**Tashlich:** On the first afternoon of Rosh Hashanah (provided that it is not Shabbat), it is customary to go to a body of water (ocean, river, pond, etc.) and perform the Tashlich ceremony, in which we ceremonially cast our sins into the water. With this tradition we are symbolically evoking the verse, "And You shall cast their sins into the depths of the sea." The short prayer for this service can be found in your machzor. ❖



CHASSIDUS

**5:55-6:10 AM**  
Monday-Friday  
**THE MITZVAH OF LOVING OUR FELLOW JEW**  
Derech Mitzvosecha



SHULCHAN ARUCH

**1:40-1:45 PM**  
Monday-Thursday  
**HILCHOS TEFILLAH**  
Laws of Reading the Shema

**9:25-9:30 PM**  
Sunday-Thursday  
**HILCHOS SHLIACH TZIBUR**  
*Laws of Leading the Davening*



TALMUD

**9:30-10:00 PM**  
Tuesday  
Currently learning  
**TALMUD, tractate SUKKAH p. 24a**  
**POSTPONED**



MISHNA

**8:30-9:10 PM**  
Wednesday  
**MISHNAYOS, tractate TAANIS**  
Chapter 3



CHUMASH

**8:00-9:00 PM**  
Thursday  
**Bereishis 1:1**



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MONDAY EVENING TORAH STUDIES

7:00-8:00 PM • Maariv at 9:15

Monday, October 7, 2019

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This course explores negative emotions in a completely new light, offering spiritual mechanisms that allow us to remain upbeat no matter what life brings.

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29 Teves 5780 / January 26, 2020

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