

# Torah Weekly

September 3-9, 2023  
17-23 Elul, 5783

Torah: Nitzavim&Vayelech:  
Deuteronomy 29:9 - 31:30  
Haftorah: Isaiah 61:10-63:9

PARSHAT  
NITZAVIM&VAYELECH

## Calendars

We have Jewish Calendars. If you would like one, please send us a letter and we will send you one, or ask the Rabbi/Chaplain to contact us.

## Family Programs

Do you have family on the outside struggling? Please contact or have them contact our office to learn more about our family programs. You and they are not alone, we are here to help.

## Grape Juice & Matzah

We offer free Grape Juice and Matzoh for you to be able to make the blessings every Shabbos. Please have your chaplain / Rabbi contact us to enroll (available to all prisons).

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No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

## Conviction or Compromise?

Did you hear of the fellow who proudly announced, "I am a man of principles! And if you don't like my principles, well then, I have others."

The portion of Vayelech follows directly after Nitzavim. In fact, in most years, the two are read together on the same Shabbat. Now, Nitzavim means standing firm, while Vayelech means to move and be mobile, which seem somewhat contradictory. However, the juxtaposition of these two Parshahs prompted the Rebbe to comment that while they may seem to reflect conflicting themes, there is a very powerful message in the one following directly on the other.

Nitzavim doesn't only mean "standing." That would be the Hebrew word omdim. The word Nitzavim means "standing firmly." And the Rebbe's message<sup>1</sup> is that only by standing firmly by our principles and convictions can we, in fact, move forward in life and live to express the vayelech "upwardly mobile" theme. We need principles that are real and uncompromising.

There are so many stories that I'm sure so many of our readers can share when they experienced this message personally. Let me share two, both on a similar theme.

Back in the early 1970s, I spent several years studying in Montreal at the Rabbinical College of Canada. I also received my semichah (rabbinical ordination) there. One of the prominent families in the Montreal Jewish community back then were the Richlers. And I remember clearly the true story of their family business and the challenges they faced, specifically regarding Shabbat observance. The Richler

Brothers ran a very big business in the motor industry, selling and servicing trucks, if I'm not mistaken.

The family was Shabbat-observant. Their business, as big as it was, was closed on Shabbat and Yom Tov. Once, they were given a very lucrative contract with the Ford Motor Company of Canada. But when Ford discovered that Richlers didn't operate on Shabbat, they canceled the contract, arguing that it could never work.

However, sometime later, Ford approached the Richlers again, and this time they offered to abide by their religious requirements. Apparently, the other company they had engaged didn't quite meet their professional expectations, and they came back to the Richlers "cap in hand."

Ford and Richler went on to have a very successful relationship for many years.

In my own community in Johannesburg, South Africa, a similar story played out back in the 1970's and 80's, albeit on a smaller level.

The Arenstein Brothers, Monty and Itz, had started a motor dealership. It was a retail business selling automobiles. Monty was Shabbat-observant and insisted that the business would be too. Now, anyone who is familiar with the motor trade knows that most car sales are made on weekends when people have time to go shopping and test drive cars to their satisfaction. How would a motor dealership ever succeed if it was closed on Shabbat?

But Monty insisted. The brothers even borrowed the title of an old movie, and their slogan, bumper stickers and all, was "Never on Shabbos."

I distinctly remember a particular Tishrei, a month replete with Jewish holidays,

which decreased the number of days they were open for business to a fraction of a regular month's work. The other partners argued that it would be impossible to sell even a minimum of vehicles that month. How would they survive financially?

Well, what should I tell you? Not only did they survive, but they thrived. And after some years they sold the business for a very good price.

Like the Richlers in Montreal, the Arensteins in Johannesburg stuck by their convictions.

May we all have the courage of our convictions and see the blessings materialize in our lives.

By Rabbi Yossi Goldman

## Unity is Our Strength

*You are standing together today, all of you . . . to enter into a covenant"—Deuteronomy 29:9, 11.*

The Torah portion of Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah, which is the anniversary of the creation of man and the day on which, every year, all of creation is judged. How do we merit receiving a favorable judgment from on high? The answer is alluded to in the opening verse of this week's reading: "You are standing together today, all of you . . . to enter into a covenant." Each part of this statement is significant.

"Standing" connotes victory—that we merit receiving a favorable verdict. "Today" is the annual Day of Judgment, Rosh Hashanah. "All of you" means the entire nation—as one. "To enter into a covenant" refers to the fact that every individual pledges responsibility to one another, that each is a guarantor for the other. **As long as we hold true to our pact of mutual guarantorship, we are assured that G d's judgment will be for the good**

In other words, upon what basis do we receive a favorable judgment? It is based on our unity. As long as we hold true to our pact of mutual guarantorship, then we are assured that G-d's judgment of us will be for the good.

A question arises, however: How can every single member of a nation be a guarantor for everyone else? A guarantor must be one who is better off than the one he is guaranteeing. For instance, when a poor man applies for a loan, he asks a wealthier man to be his guarantor. You would not take someone who is poorer than you to be your guarantor. In that case, how can every single individual be a guarantor for all others? Certainly, in any large group of people there are those who have little to offer. How can every individual then be a guarantor for every other?

The answer is simple. In the case of the covenant between G-d and His people, every individual possesses some unique advantage over every other. Each one can therefore serve as a guarantor for the other. Each member of the nation has some positive quality that is unique to him or her. Every individual is uniquely needed and indispensable.

By "standing together," in a way that emphasizes our complete interdependence, we surrender our personal identities and redefine ourselves as a part of a greater, unified whole. In this way, we are no longer judged on an individual basis, but as one whole—which includes all of the redeeming virtues of *all* of the individuals combined.

**Ultimately, our welfare relies on the fellowship of recovery.** First and foremost, our recovery from addiction is a program. Each one of us works this program at varying levels of commitment and proficiency. Each one of us has his or her own strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures. But ultimately, our welfare depends on more than just an individual program of recovery; also, perhaps even more importantly, it relies on the *fellowship* of recovery. In the group, individual shortcomings fall away, and all that is left are the unique strengths that each individual brings to the whole. Each of us, without exception, has some unique and vital contribution to make to our fellows, and upon which each one of us depends. As lone individuals, we could never have overcome our addictions and live useful and happy lives, but together we stand as a testimony to the fact that there is strength in unity.

Together we are a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

*By Rabbi Ben A.*

## IN JEWISH HISTORY

**Sunday, September 3, 2023 --- 17 Elul, 5783**

**Noah Dispatches Dove (2105 BCE)**

Following the failed attempt to dispatch a raven from the ark (see "Today in Jewish History" for Elul 10), Noah sent a dove from the window of the ark to see if the great Flood that covered the earth had abated. "But the dove found no resting place for the sole of its foot" and returned to the ark; Noah waited seven days before making another attempt.

**R. Schneur Zalman's parents marry (1743)**

Wedding day of Rabbi Baruch and Rebbetzin Rivkah, the parents of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812 -- see entry for tomorrow, Elul 18), in 1743.

**Outbreak of World War II (1939)**

On September 1, 1939, corresponding to the Hebrew date of 17 Elul, the Nazi Wehrmacht invaded Poland, launching World War II. The war would prove to be the deadliest conflict in history, resulting in the death of some 60 million people, including the six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust as part of the Final Solution.

**Monday, September 4, 2023 --- 18 Elul, 5783**

**Passing of Maharal (1609)**

Elul 18 is the yahrtzeit of Rabbi Yehudah Loewe, the "Maharal" of Prague (1525-1609), outstanding Torah scholar, philosopher, Kabbalist and Jewish leader. Popularly known for creating a "golem" (clay man) to protect the Jewish community of Prague from the frequent threat of blood libels.

**Baal Shem Tov Born (1698)**

Elul 18 is the birthday of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidism.

Drawing from the mystical "soul of Torah," the Baal Shem Tov ("Master of the Good Name," as he came to be known) taught about the spark of G-dliness that is to be found in every creation, and about the great love that G-d has for each and every one of His children, scholars and simple folk alike

**Chassidic Movement Founded (1734)**

After many years as a member of the society of "hidden tzaddikim", living under the guise of an ignorant clay-digger, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov was instructed by his masters to reveal himself and begin to publicly disseminate his teachings. This he did on his 36th birthday, Elul 18, 5494 (1734).

**1st Chabad Rebbe Born (1745)**

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), founder of the "Chabad" branch of Chassidism, was born on Elul 18 of the year 5505 from creation -- the 47th birthday of his "spiritual grandfather", Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (Rabbi Schneur Zalman was the disciple of the Baal Shem Tov's disciple and successor, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch).

**Tuesday, September 5, 2023-19 Elul, 5783**

**Passing of R. Chaim Benveniste (1673)**

R. Chaim Benveniste was a renowned scholar who served as rabbi in Türe, a town near Izmir, Turkey, and then in Izmir itself. His most famous work is *Kenesses Hagedolah*, a collection of halachic material arranged according to the order of the Code of Jewish Law.

Notable members of the Benveniste family include Don Joseph Benveniste and Dona Gracia Mendes-Nasi.

**Thursday, September 7, 2023-21 Elul, 5783**

**Passing of R. Yonatan Eibeshitz (1764)**

R. Yonatan Eibeshitz was a brilliant Torah scholar, preacher, and kabbalist. He led a Torah academy in Prague, and later served as rabbi in Metz and in the joint cities of Altona, Hamburg, and Wandsbek. R. Yonatan authored many works in the fields of Jewish law, homily, and other topics. Some of his more well-known works include *Kereiti U'Pleiti*.

**Friday, September 8, 2023 --- 22 Elul, 5783**

**Passing of R. Yaakov Moelin (the Maharil) (1427)**

Yaakov Moelin, known as the Maharil, was recognized as the supreme halachic authority for Ashkenazi Jewry in his day. His customs, collected in *Minhagei Maharil* (and cited often by R. Moshe Isserles in his comments to the Code of Jewish Law), are the basis for the conduct of Ashkenazi Jewry in many areas of Jewish life, especially in matters relating to prayer and synagogue procedure.

**Shabbos, September 9, 2023-23 Elul, 5783**

**Dove brings Olive Leaf (2105 BCE)**

On the 301st day of the great Flood, Noah sent a dove for the 2nd time from the ark (see "Today in Jewish History" for Elul 17). This time, the dove stayed away all day; "the dove came in to him in the evening, and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off; and Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth" (Genesis 8:11)

**Yahrzeit of the 9/11 Terror Attack Victims (2001)**

Two planes were crashed into the Twin Towers in lower Manhattan. A third was rammed into the Pentagon, the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the United States Department of Defense.

**The passing of R. Meir Shlomo Yanovsky (c. 1933)**

R. Meir Shlomo Yanovsky was the rabbi of Nikolayev, in the Ukraine, from 1890 until his passing. His daughter Chana married R. Levi Yitzchak Schneerson, and their son was R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe.