

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR FATHER
Harav **Mordechai Yosef Shimon**
ben Reb **Yerachmiel Menachem Berger** ע"ה
Passed away on 27 Elul, 5773

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

Reprinted for Parshat Nitzavim-Vayeilech, 5783
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“5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL”

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AND IN HONOR OF HIS WIFE - שתבלחט"א
 Mrs. **Elka** bas **Raizel** שתח'ל **Caplan**
 May she go from strength to strength
 in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.

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LIKKUTEI SICHOT

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the

Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

•

Volume X: *Devarim*

•

In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR FREIND

Reb **Yosef Yisroel** ben Reb **Sholom** ע"ה **Rosner**

Passed away on 7 Menachem-Av, 5777

ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

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NITZAVIM

G-D'S BLESSING

There is a well-known statement by the Alter Rebbe,¹ quoting the Maggid of Mezeritch, who quoted the Baal Shem Tov, explaining why we do not recite the blessing for the new month on the *Shabbos* preceding Rosh HaShanah:

The seventh month, which is “the first of the months of the year,”² is blessed by G-d Himself on the *Shabbos* of blessing, the last *Shabbos* of Elul. With the power [imparted by this blessing], the Jews bless the 11 [coming] months.³

1. See Koveitz *Michtavim*, 1; printed in *Tehillim Ohel Yosef Yitzchak*, p. 193; *HaYom Yom*, entry 25 Elul.

2. The Alter Rebbe is borrowing the Torah's words (*Shmos* 12:2), but changing their intent. For here the emphasis is on the word “year.” [And thus the month referred to is Tishrei, not Nissan.]

The use of an accepted phrase for a different intent is an established practice. See *Tosafos*, *Chulin* 68a, entry *Adam*; note, however, *Tosafos*, *Kiddushin* 48a, entry *Ileimah*. See also the sources quoted in *Yad Malachi*, sec. 374; *S'dei Chemed*, *Klallim Lamed*, sec. 98.

3. That the power required for the Jews to bless the coming 11 months is imparted by G-d's blessing of the month of Elul, is — as are all concepts of *P'nimiyus HaTorah* — alluded to in *Nigleh*, the revealed Torah law. The *Pesikta deRabbi Kahana*, ch. 5, states: “Until the Jews left Egypt, the Holy One, blessed be He, sat and calculated... and ordained the new months. When the Jews left Egypt... He charged them with this task... From that time onward, they are entrusted to them.”

The words “charged” and “entrusted” indicate that G-d gave the Jews His power to ordain new months.

See also the *Magen Avraham* 417:1, which states that the present custom of blessing the month echoes the sanctification of the new month by the court.

servant David, I have anointed him with My holy oil.”⁸

...Added emphasis should be placed on all of the above this year, for two reasons. First, this year it is customary to recite the Psalm, which makes reference to the coming of *Moshiach*, when it states: "I have found my servant David, I have anointed him with my holy oil." In addition, this year we have reached the milestone of forty years since the passing of the Previous Rebbe, at which time "G-d has given you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."⁹ These [being a "*shaliach*" to announce "Behold he comes" and hearing Eliyahu's pronouncement because "I await him every day"] become even more significant since seven days have already passed since we entered into the year [57]51 - תשא"ו - אראנו נפלאות - Avenu Niflaos - I will show him wonders, following the initials of the year.

(From the talk of Wednesday, Parshas Beracha, 7 Tishrei 5751)

8. 89:21.

9. *Tavo* 29:3.

3

May it be G-d's Will - and this is the essential point - that each and every one of us should become a "shaliach" (a messenger) to inform oneself, one's family, and all the Jews around him or her that: **"Here he [Moshiach] comes."**¹ and "Behold, this is our G-d... this is the L-rd for whom we hoped."²

(Note that the word "this" [indicating a clear recognition] is mentioned twice.)³ and "Behold, David the Anointed King" [is here] - and therefore *Eliyahu HaNavi* [the prophet] already appeared a day earlier in T'verya [Tiberius]⁴ to announce the arrival of our righteous Moshiach.

It may be suggested that, since Moshiach can come any day - "I await his coming **every day**"⁵ - and since *Eliyahu HaNavi* must announce Moshiach's arrival the day before, that therefore *Eliyahu HaNavi* **actually comes every day** to T'verya and announces the coming of Moshiach. The announcement is directed particularly to those who put themselves in a position of "I await his coming every day," even though (as is the custom of *Chabad*)⁶ they do not actually articulate this verbally, but only think about it. [The announcement is made specifically to us] when we recite [this year],⁷ from the well-known Psalm, the verse: "I have found My

It is written:⁴ *atem nitzavim hayom*, "You are standing today." *Hayom*, "today," refers to Rosh HaShanah,⁵ the day of judgment, as it is written:⁶ "And it came to pass (*hayom*) on that day," which the *Targum* renders: "the day of awesome judgment." [And on that day,] "You are standing,"⁷ triumphant in the judgment.

On the *Shabbos* before Rosh HaShanah, which is the last *Shabbos* of Elul,⁸ we read the portion *Atem Nitzavim*. This includes the blessing of the Holy One, blessed be He, on the *Shabbos* on which the seventh month is blessed. It is a month which is satiated — and which satiates all of Israel — with manifold goodness for the entire [coming] year.

The commentaries⁹ explain that the verse: "You are standing today... to enter into a covenant," introduces the concept of mutual responsibility; that each Jew serves as a guarantor for every other, as it is said:¹⁰ "All Israel are responsible one for another."

Several questions arise:

a) What is the connection between the latter interpretation and the one offered by the Baal Shem Tov?¹¹

b) We find¹² that although the covenant of mutual responsibility was established by Moshe our teacher, it did not take effect until the Jewish people actually entered *Eretz Yisrael*.

1. Expression used in *Shir HaShirim* [Song of Songs], 2:8.

2. *Yeshayahu [Isaiah]*, 25:9. See end of [tractate] *Ta'anis*.

3. *Shemos Rabbah*, end of chapter 23.

4. See *Eiruvin* 43b: Eliyahu has arrived yesterday... to the Great Court." In turn, the Great Court will first be restored in T'verya [Tiberius]" Rambam, *Hilchos Sanhedrin*, end of chapter 14.

5. Twelfth of the "Thirteen Principles of Faith."

6. See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. IX, p. 282 ff.

7. [It is a Chassidic custom to recite Psalms corresponding to one's age as well the Psalm corresponding to the Rebbe's age. This sicha was said during the Rebbe's 89th year. Translator's note.]

4. *Devarim* 29:9.

5. See *Paneach Rازه*, *Parshas Nitzavim*; *Likkutei Torah*, beginning of *Parshas Nitzavim*.

6. *Iyov* 2:1.

7. See *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Parshas Nitzavim*, sec. 1.

8. See *Tosafos*, *Megillah* 31b, entry *Klallos*; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim* 428:4; *Likkutei Torah*, *ibid*.

9. Or *HaChayim*, *Kli Yakor* on above verse.

10. *Shavuos* 39a; *Sanhedrin* 27a.

11. For as explained in the *sichah* for *Parshas Toldos* in this series, all the interpretations of a word or verse share a connection to each other.

12. See *Sanhedrin* 43b.

BESURAS HAGEULO The Announcement Of The Redemption

2

Why didn't the concept of mutual responsibility take effect as soon as the covenant was established?

WHO CAN SERVE AS A GUARANTOR?

The above questions can be resolved by clarifying the concept of mutual responsibility. Logically, one would only accept as a guarantor a person who was greater (with regard to the matter at hand) than the person entering the covenant. For example, when a poor man applies for a loan, one accepts a rich man as a guarantor. One would not accept a poor man as a guarantor for a rich one.

This is not the case with regard to the mutual responsibility of the Jewish people. Every Jew, even the lowest, is responsible for all the rest. Moreover, this is expressed in Torah law with regard to the blessings recited before the performance of a *mitzvah*. Although he has already fulfilled a *mitzvah* himself, every Jew — even one on a very low level — can recite a blessing for another Jew — even one on the highest level, because “All Israel are responsible one for another.”¹³

WHEN THE FOOT BECOMES A HEAD

The Alter Rebbe interprets¹⁴ the above verse to mean that the Jewish people are a single entity. This leads to a further concept. In the human body, every limb complements every other. For example, the feet possess a certain quality which the head does not, and in this way, the feet complement the head. Similarly with regard to the ten levels within the Jewish people mentioned in this passage: “the hewers of wood” and “the drawers of water” possess a certain advantage over “your heads,” and complement the latter.

We can all see (in this year of miracles) how the signs of Redemption mentioned by our Sages have been fulfilled. This includes the sign cited in *Yalkut Shimoni*¹ (which has been mentioned recently several times):

"In the year the King Moshiach will be revealed, the kings of all the nations of the world will struggle with each other... the king of Persia will provoke the Arabian king; the Arabian king will [then] go to *Aram*² for advice... All the nations of the world will be in turmoil and terror... And (G-d) will say to them (Israel), "My children, do not be afraid, all that I have done I have done only for your sake... Do not fear, the time for your Redemption has arrived!..."

The *Yalkut* then continues:

When the King Moshiach comes he will stand on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash [Holy Temple] and will proclaim to Israel, 'Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived!'"

*(From the talk of Wednesday, Parshas Netzavim-Vayeilech,
22 Elul, 5750)*

13. *Rashi, Rosh HaShanah 29a, entry Af al pi; Shulchan Aruch HaRav 197:6.*

14. *Likkutei Torah, ibid.*

1. *Yeshayahu, remez 499; Also in P'sikta Rabasi, 37 (s.v. kumi ori).*

2. In the *Pesikta* there [the version is] "to Edom."

The Alter Rebbe was chosen to compose his *Shulchan Aruch*.⁶ In this text, he carefully selected rules of conduct as prescribed by *Nigleh*. He also founded *Chabad Chassidus*, setting up an approach for the study of *P'nimiyus HaTorah* and for our Divine service. And he developed a version of the prayer service which is appropriate for every Jew.⁷

These three contributions are appropriate for the Jewish people as a whole, and for every individual. Using them, a Jew can negotiate his ascent to all levels through prayer, and draw down influence through the medium of the Torah.

May it be G-d's will that we follow the paved path prepared for us, and spread the wellsprings of the Alter Rebbe's teachings (this includes the rulings of his *Shulchan Aruch* and his version of the *Siddur*) to all Jews. And through spreading these wellsprings outward, we will merit the fulfillment of the promise of *Mashiach's* coming. May it be in the immediate future.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech*, 5715)



6. See his sons' Introduction to his *Shulchan Aruch*.

7. See *Beis Rebbe*, Vol. I, ch. 10: "When he structured his *Siddur*, he had 60 different versions before him, and he conceived a version most appropriate than all of them."

This helps us understand why "All Israel are responsible one for another." For every single Jew possesses a particular advantage over every other, and can therefore serve as a guarantor for him.

LEVELS OF ONENESS

In the above *maamar*, the Alter Rebbe cites the verse:¹⁵ "When the leaders of the people assembled the tribes of Israel," and explains that "the people come together to be united as one." In this vein, he refers to the analogy of the human body mentioned above, that every limb complements each other, and that all need each other. And he concludes: "The entire Jewish people are a single complete entity."

The wording of the Alter Rebbe is very precise. Thus although the phrase "come together to be united as one" may appear to contain a redundancy, each phrase contributes something. After stating that every limb complements every other, and that all are interdependent, the Alter Rebbe concludes: "The entire Jewish people are a single complete entity."

To explain: there are three levels in the unity of the Jewish people: "come together," "united," and "as one." "Come together" is stated in the verse cited previously. The Alter Rebbe adds that the Jews' togetherness is based on unity, and he explains the nature of this unity by stating that every individual complements every other, and that we all need each other. He then adds that there is a deeper level; the Jews are "as one." He then amplifies this thought with the statement: "The entire Jewish people are a single complete entity."

To clarify: "Together" reflects the purposeful joining of distinct entities that do not share any inherent connection. For this reason, the Alter Rebbe uses the terms "united" and "as one" to indicate that the bond between the Jewish people

15. *Devarim* 33:5.

is deeper than that. The Jews are a group of distinct people who come together “to fulfill Your will with a complete heart.”¹⁶ But they also share a deeper connection; they are “united as one.”

“United” implies togetherness reinforced by an internal connection. When different entities come together for a shared purpose, their individuality is preserved. When they are “united,” the individual potential each possesses is joined to the others. Each one adds a quality which the others lack.

“As one” points to an even deeper bond. When entities are “united,” they are still referred to in the plural. “As one” refers to a singular entity. This is reflected in the analogy of the human body, which though comprised of many limbs and organs is a single organism. Not only do the limbs complement each other, they merge to create a single entity.¹⁷

IT’S NOT BAD TO STICK OUT

The above, however, prompts a question: Since the bond implied by the term “as one” indicates a deeper connection than mere unity, why does the Alter Rebbe mention unity at all? And why does he elaborate upon it, employing the example of the head and feet?

This indicates that being united possesses an advantage over being simply “one.”

Consider: As mentioned, a person’s limbs and organs are part of one body. But that body is able to function as it should only when each of its limbs is working properly. If the func-

16. Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur liturgy.

17. These two qualities which relate to the unity of the Jewish people on Rosh HaShanah are also reflected in the *mitzvah* of the four species on Sukkos. For as explained in *Chassidus*, the qualities which are hidden on Rosh HaShanah are revealed on Sukkos.

Each of the four species reflects the concept of unity (see the series of *maamarim* entitled *VeKachah*, 5637, sec. 87), and all four together constitute one *mitzvah* [*Sefer HaMitzvos LeHaRambam, Shoresch 11*].

A parallel applies to “the duties of the heart,” the inner dimension of our Divine service, and its expression in the emotions of love and fear. Here, there is room for plurality, for each person has his gate, the medium through which he is elevated and establishes a connection with G-dliness.⁴ This individuality applies, however, only with regard to particular elements of our Torah heritage.

To cite an example: There are various versions of the prayer services. These differences have their source in the fact that “there were 13 prostrations in the [*Beis*] *HaMikdash* paralleling the 13 gates which will be in [the *Beis HaMikdash* of] the Future Era.”⁵

Twelve of the 13 gates are for the 12 tribes, one gate for each tribe. The thirteenth gate is “the general gate,” for the entire Jewish people without distinction. In the analog, this refers to a version of the prayer service which is applicable to all Jews.

It is true that there is an advantage for every tribe to follow the prayer service appropriate for it, entering through its individual gate. Indeed, “at the time when every individual knew the tribe to which he belonged, it was preferable that every individual enter through his [tribe’s] gate.... At present, however, when [by and large] we do not know to which tribe we belong, it is preferable to enter via the general gate. [This applies] even to select individuals such as priests and Levites, who know the identity of their tribe. This general gate refers to the version of the prayers authored by the *AriZal*.”⁵

The same holds true with regard to Torah study. There are individuals whose souls share a connection to *Nigleh*, the revealed dimension of Torah law, and others who share a connection to *P’nimiyus HaTorah*, the Torah’s mystic heritage. When one does not know where one’s soul is rooted, however, one should use “the general gate.”

5. *Likkutei Torah* of the Maggid of Mezeritch, as quoted in the Introduction of *Shaar HaKollel*.

VAYEILECH

PLURALISM AND INDIVIDUALITY

On the verse:¹ “Take this Torah scroll,” our Sages comment² that on the last day of his life, Moshe our teacher wrote 13 Torah scrolls. Twelve were given to the Jewish people, one for each tribe, and the thirteenth was placed in the Holy Ark. “Were anyone to try to falsify any [portion of] the Torah, [this scroll] could be taken out from the Ark, [to disprove the claim].”

The Torah is eternal. This applies even to the stories of the Torah, for they provide lessons for the Jewish people in every generation. Although there is room for variation with regard to some customs, there is a general uniformity in Torah practice.

To explain: There may be differences in local customs, and at times the view of one *Halachic* authority is accepted over that of another, for “these and these are the words of the living G-d.”³ This is possible because the Torah was given to be studied “as a general set of rules, with particular — and even the most detailed — applications.”⁴ Every Jewish soul has its roots in one particular element of the Torah, and must conduct itself as directed by that particular element.⁴

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1. *Devarim* 31:26.
 2. *Devarim Rabbah* 9:9; *Midrash Sochar Tov* 90; see the *Rambam's* introduction to the *Mishneh Torah*.
 3. *Eruvin* 13b.
 4. The Alter Rebbe's Introduction to *Tanya*.

tion of even one of the limbs is impaired, the entire body is imperfect.¹⁸ This indicates that the individual nature of every limb is important.

Yes, there is an advantage to being “at one” over being “united,” for the fundamental nature of every limb and organ is the fact that it forms part of a complete organism. But this essential quality is not reflected in the external functioning of each organ, for in its function, each organ expresses its individual nature. This is the advantage of being “united” — that even though each limb (i.e. each individual Jew) exists as a distinct entity, all the limbs (i.e. all the Jews) are unified and complement each other.¹⁹

The Alter Rebbe's explanation of “unity” is more detailed because our Divine service is directed towards realizing that goal.²⁰ Accordingly, every Jew, as he functions within his own identity as a soul enclothed within a body, must be “of a humble spirit in the presence of every person.”²¹ For every other person possesses qualities that can complement his own.

18. Man is an intermediate creation, including elements from the highest peaks and the lowest depths. Therefore he must have both a head and feet (see the series of *maamarim* beginning Rosh HaShanah, 5702).

The reason mankind must possess the lower potentials is *because* of their mean nature; our ultimate perfection requires the possession of such “low” qualities. To cite a parallel: Man's body is fashioned from the dust, the lowest form of inanimate matter. This reflects the tremendous power of our souls; which descend from the highest level (*Torah Or, Bereishis*, p. 4a; the *maamar* entitled *Zeh HaYom*, 5700, sec. 2).

Since the feet — because they are on a lowly plane — are an essential element in man's consummate perfection, they are also granted an advantage with regard to a person's revealed powers; they support the head.

19. To refer to another *Chassidic* concept: This reflects the advantage of the quality alluded to by the word *echad* over the simple oneness implied by the word *yachid*. See *Torah Or, Va'eira*, p. 55b.
20. To cite a parallel, *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1334-1335, speaks of an advantage possessed by man's perception of G-d's oneness {as reflected in the verse (*Devarim* 4:39): “And you shall know today...”} over the revelation of that oneness from above {as reflected in the verse (*Devarim* 4:35): “And you have been shown to know...”}.
21. *Avos* 4:12.

FROM THE INSIDE OUT

The two levels implied by the words “united” and “at one,” are dependent on each other. The external unity that connects our people as individuals enhances the inner bond, which unites us “as one.” Were the individual elements to be entirely discrete entities, it would be impossible for them to share an inner bond.

Bittul, the external selflessness that allows for sharing with and receiving from each other, expresses the fact that ultimately every person is more than himself; he is a member of the Jewish people at large.

Since the inner nature of the entire Jewish people is “at one,” our external dimensions are unified and complementary.¹⁸ Were each person’s inner dimensions to be merely personal — for his personal qualities are, after all, what is most important to him — he would not require the support and influence of others. Nevertheless, because the inner dimension of the Jewish people is one, their external dimensions reflect that inner oneness and are therefore complementary.

ENTERING ERETZ YISRAEL

On this basis, we can understand why the Jews’ covenant of mutual responsibility only took effect with our entry into *Eretz Yisrael*. The word *areivim*, which means “mutually responsible” also means “mixed together.” The identities of the entire Jewish people are intermingled, for our people is “united, as one.”

Such unity is possible only by virtue of a transcendent light,²² and our people were not exposed to that transcendent light until they entered *Eretz Yisrael*. For it is only in *Eretz Yisrael* that we will fulfill G-d’s ultimate intent in creation,

22. See *Tanya*, *Iggeres HaKodesh*, Epistle 12; *Likkutei Torah*, *Vayikra* 23c.

and make the world a dwelling for Him.²³ And therefore it was not until our entry into *Eretz Yisrael* that the covenant of mutual responsibility took effect.²⁴

IN UNITY THERE IS STRENGTH

On this basis, we can understand the connection between the Baal Shem Tov’s interpretation of *Atem Nitzavim* — that the Jews stand victorious in the judgment of Rosh HaShanah — with the statement that this verse refers to the covenant of mutual responsibility.

By “standing... together,” “united as one,” without thought as to who is on a higher plane and who is on a lower one, we subsume our personal identities amidst the Jewish people as a whole. This will surely cause us to emerge victorious in judgment, for the Jewish nation as a whole is surely good. And this will cause us to be inscribed for a good and sweet year in the year to come.

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech*, 5718, 5719)



23. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Shelach* in this series, where this concept is explained.

24. The covenant of mutual responsibility for the observance of the Torah and its *mitzvos* presupposes a united nation, a union established between a number of souls functioning as self-conscious entities encloded in bodies. This level was revealed with our entry into *Eretz Yisrael*.

The potential for such unity stems from the fact that the Jewish people are essentially “at one.” This reflects an inner oneness at the core of our souls, above and beyond the level encloded in our bodies. Therefore it was appropriate that the covenant for mutual responsibility was established while the Jews were in the desert, at which time our existence was more spiritually oriented. Similarly, it was significant that Moshe — characterized by the ultimate *bittul* of *mah* — was the one who “negotiated” the covenant. See *Tanya*, ch. 32.