



Tiferet

ת פ א ר ת



TIFERET SHABBAT

This Week in Tiferet

Our students settled into their “normal” routine this week of fascinating and inspiring shiurim, and intense independent learning. On Wednesday afternoon though, Tiferet Shana Alef students went on a chesed tiyul, volunteering at two special organizations. First, our students went to **Yad Eliezer**, where we packaged food for Rosh Hashana packages for the needy of Yerushalayim. Afterwards, we went to the **Shalva Beit Nachshon Center**, where we experienced the amazing work this organization does on behalf of children with special needs. It was an inspiring experience for our students!

תורת תפארת

Who are you?

Rav Elie Mayer (ravmayer@gmail.com)

Parshat Nitzavim Vayelech

In 1977, under the influence of drugs and alcohol, Pete Townshend wrote the song, Who Are You. It became an anthem for the drug culture of the 1970's, echoing the confusion of people that were pumped with chemicals. The question of Who Are You is still relevant today. It is seemingly a simple question to answer but in fact, is quite difficult. Most people provide their profession, title or place in a family unit. But there is certainly more to us than our job. If so, why is this question so difficult?

I believe that the reason lies in our being out of touch with ourselves. Our immersion in technology, culture and social media has robbed us of crucial time alone to get to know our true selves. Often, youth, void of any identity, feel compelled to adopt other identities that are foreign to their own. We are all made up of many personas that are not really us and become untrue to ourselves. We adopt attitudes, habits and even phrases and body language from people we encounter. After every school year, summer camp, and social experience, we incorporate a bit of others into ourselves. After years of integrating bits of others into ourselves, the question becomes all the more difficult; who are you?

Rosh Hashana is upon us and the Yamim Noraim urge us to confront ourselves and return to our natural and pure state of individuality.

Teshuva is from the word shuv - to return. According to the teachings of Rav Kook in Orot HaTeshuva, teshuva mandates us to go back to our Source. Everything in the world should return to its intended purpose. Every morning, we recite: אלוקי נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא. Hashem created us as a pure, unique soul. Rav Kook says that on Rosh Hashana, we need to return to that person that Hashem created.

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MAZAL TOV!

Mazal Tov to David and **Avigayil (Horn)** Tannenbaum (5766) on the birth of their daughter, Leah Bracha! May they be zochim to raise her l'Torah, l'chupa u'l'masim tovim!

Mazal Tov to **Laura Barnett (5769, madricha)** on her marriage to Moshe Steibel! May they be zochim to build a bayit ne'e'an b'Yisrael!

Mazal Tov to **Shayna Kuflik (5771)** on her engagement to Hillel Adler! May they be zochim to build a bayit ne'eman b'Yisrael!

Mazal Tov to **Tali Rosenfeld (5771)** on her marriage to Tzali Dulitz! May they be zochim to build a bayit ne'eman b'Yisrael!

Mazal Tov to **Chani Colton (5773)** on her engagement to Josh Gildin ! May they be zochim to build a bayit ne'eman b'Yisrael!

Multiple Choice Eliya Fridman (Tiferet 5773)

”החיים והמות נתתי לפניך הברכה והקללה ובחרתם חיים למען תחיה אתה וזרעך” (דברים ל: י"ט)
I have placed before you life and death, blessing and curse. You shall choose life so that you will live, you and your offspring (Devarim 30:19)

In this Pasuk, Hashem was not referring to physically choosing between life and death but instead, spiritually choosing between life and death. In his book “The Guiding Light- Practical Torah Perspectives” Rabbi Yehonason Gefen quotes Rav Noach Weinberg who explains that when the Torah talks about "life" it does not just mean breathing. Rather, "life" is the process of growing in one's Divine Service and working on one's character. Hashem gave Bnei Yisrael the choice between life and death, blessing and curse. Just like heaven and earth have a specific mission that Hashem has commanded them, we too have a specific mission that Hashem has commanded us. We are commanded to keep the Torah and live life observing the Mitzvot. When we keep the Torah, we are truly choosing life for ourselves. And when we disregard the Torah and the Mitzvot, we are choosing death.

Shouldn't it be obvious that we should choose life and blessing over death and curse? Of course we would all choose life and blessing, but it's just not always the easiest choice. This Pasuk is meant to strengthen us, reminding us that we should ALWAYS choose life over death, even in the toughest of times. This applies to all people, but specifically for us young women who just came out of Israel for the year. We are thrown back into this crazy world of decision after decision, and quite frankly they are not always the easiest to make. Any decision that is hard for us to make, but then we end up choosing the one we know is right, we are in essence choosing life. Anyone can choose death. Choosing death is easy. Not putting in the effort to learn on your time off is easy. Not waking up before class to daven is easy. Every poor decision we make, we are ultimately choosing death. Choosing death usually gives us immediate gratification. And choosing life, usually takes time for us to feel good about the decision. But in the long run, we end up being content with our choice and happy that we chose the decision we know was the right one! Now, right before Rosh Hashana, is the ULTIMATE time for us to keep this idea in our minds and examine our ways to make sure we are always choosing life over death!

May this pasuk help us overcome our Yetzer Hara, to choose life over death with all of the challenges that come our way, in order so that we can serve Hakadosh Baruch Hu the right way! May we all have a year filled with constant growth in our Torah learning and Avodat Hashem. Shabbat Shalom V' Shana Tova!

תורת תפארת (המשך)

In Parshat Nitzavim, the pasuk reads: "I will bring heaven and earth to witness to you this day.." Rashi comments: "Just as heaven and earth have not betrayed their nature... you.. how much more so!"

Perhaps Parshat Nitzavim always precedes the Yamim Noraim to adjure us to not betray our soulful essence. Chet really means to miss, as in להחטיא את המטרה - to miss the mark. Chet negatively alters us from who are.

There's a minhag on Erev Yom Kippur to immerse in a mikveh. According to the Shem Mishmuel, the reason we become purified in a Mikveh is that we revert to the purity we had as a fetus surrounded by the amniotic fluid. In the Mikveh, we return to that state, surrounded by water and then emerge purified, the way we entered this world - untouched and sullied by negative influences. Therefore, an integral component of the Teshuva process is to wash away the elements of ourselves that are not true to our holy nature.

A fundamental teaching of Kabbalah is that our neshama has been covered by layers of 'kelipot' or shells, hard crusts formed as spiritual defenses in the course of living similar to a peel of a fruit or the shell of a nut. Kabbalah delineates two types of Kelipah: Nogah and Kelipot HaTamayot. Kelipat Nogah can be elevated and refined. Kelipot haTamayot have no reformation and must be eliminated.

The influences that we've adopted and absorbed into our character are both good and bad. When we try to emulate a righteous individual, that is Kelipat Nogah. However, when we assimilate negative behaviors, that is Kelipot haTamayot. Nevertheless, even the positive qualities that we emulate must become our own and not mere imitations of others.

On Rosh Hashana, we read the Akeidat Yitzchak. The story begins with Hashem saying to Avraham, "Avraham". Avraham's response was, "Hineni - Here I am." G-d didn't ask where he was; why did Avraham respond with hineni? Perhaps the answer can be gleaned from looking at two other places where hineni is the response to G-d calling out someone's name. At the burning bush, G-d calls, "Moshe, Moshe." And Moshe responds, "Hineni." Also in Sefer Shmuel, Hashem calls to Shmuel who replies, "Hineni". To be called to Divine Service, Hashem checks if you are the one He created - if you've stayed true to your unique self instead of becoming a potpourri of others. Hashem asked Avraham before the Akeida, Moshe before he would be Am Yisrael's Redeemer and Shmuel before he became the nation's leading navi; Avraham - are you really Avraham or have you been influenced by Terach or your guests; Moshe, are you really the son of Amram and Yocheved or have you been influenced by Pharaoh; Shmuel, are you the son of Channa and Elkana and the disciple of Eli or have you been influenced by the sons of Eli? That is why 'Hineni' was an appropriate response. They answered, "Yes, it is me, the individual who has never been created before who stands before You.

We read magazines and books, watch shows and movies, view advertisements and interact with people throughout society. But when we stand before Hashem at Tekiyat Shofar and we are reminded of Akeidat Yitzchak, G-d is calling our names and asking us, who are you? This Rosh Hashana, let's ask ourselves that question and return to who we really are, how Hashem intends us to be and expects us to become. This Rosh Hashana let's rediscover who we really are and return to Hashem in purity.