
SHABBAT WORKS

23 Elul 5780

Friday night, September 11 - Saturday, September 12, 2020

PARASHAT NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH

DEUTERONOMY 29:9 - 31:30

HAFTARAH

ISAIAH 61:10 - 63:9

Candle Lighting: 6:46 pm

Havdalah: 7:41 pm

The Orchestra

Rabbi Mordecai Finley, Ph. D.

I have experienced a much-divided self lately as I have been thinking about the Sovereignty of the Divine, the core theme of Rosh HaShanah. I have known too much abysmal evil and suffering to believe that the hand of God orchestrates history.

Somehow, though, the hand of God shapes us. The Divine Presence can shape our values, if we do not push it away. I believe that we can establish communion with that Presence, that we can love God and experience the love of God. I believe we can be transformed by becoming present to the Divine. But does that Presence have a role in what happens between people, to people?

I find myself doubting my skepticism.

Certain things that happen to us, and certain people that come into our lives make us feel that a subtle Divine spirit wafts this way and that. Gifts are given us, gifts that we could not have imagined. We experience the universe as being generous to us in particular. Sometimes we realize that we ourselves act as the generosity of the Divine.

I witness many stories of the generosity of this gentle Divine shaping power, oftentimes at weddings. Most relationships are stories of people meeting, dating, loving, selecting and committing. Then there are stories of those who walk with a particular wound, whose bandage seems to be born by only one person. And the souls bearing those unique wounds and bandages meet each other and bond their lives. Luck? Destiny? Divine providence?

If I put my official doubt about the hand of God in history aside for a moment and just think about my journey and the journey of those close to me, often I detect a mysterious presence pulling and pushing things in my life and in theirs. A great deal of life is dealing with the troubles we face. But now and then there are people and moments of such radiance that we feel that we have been noticed and attended to.

The Orchestra, Continued

When Meirav and I think of how our generous supporters and members, our talented musicians, our hard-working lay leaders and staff came our way, we feel wonder. All of us at Ohr HaTorah benefit from each other's gifts, and the gift of community we create with each other. Even in this odd time of distancing, we feel the bonds of community.

These thoughts take me far from the idea of the Sovereignty of God, a term that sounds so austere, so heavy. Yes, values must reign supreme in my life, but we are much more than values driven beings, doing their duty. We are surrounded by the souls of others. Take a moment - that person over there has a soul, a God-formed beautiful soul, encased in a life that perhaps honors the soul within and perhaps does not. They are trying to find, sometimes so awkwardly, meaning and purpose, love and wellbeing. Can you bear that person a gift, can the Divine presence work through you?

Knowing of the suffering of humanity has made me decide that God does not orchestrate history. There seems to be a force out there, forces in history, that steamrolls individuals' search for love, justice, truth and beauty. This sickens me. I want to fight against that steamroller. My values drive me, values rooted in God. Perhaps God acts against history, through us.

The values generated by God that drive us, however, often drive us through vistas filled with spaces, notes and chords that form a song, if we listen carefully. Now and then, we can be conscious of ourselves as being part of this divine melody, like angels singing to God. We each have our section, our harmony, our note, our instrument to play. We search for others with whom we can make music. The brutal, destructive forces are there. But so is the music.

God does not seem to orchestrate history. But we each have a seat in an orchestra that plays songs of human longing. Perhaps God is attempting to direct this "midnight choir," filled with drunks and wayward souls, but a choir that now and again makes music that awes the angels into silence.

On this last Shabbat of the Jewish year, I look forward to a year in which we can see souls and hear melodies. The Chasidic tradition sees Rosh HaShanah as the 'fountain of transformation.' As we are renewed by that fountain, may the song that silences the angels flow through us.

Shabbat Zoom Sessions

Friday Evening, 7 pm

Candle Lighting and Brief Teaching

Meeting ID: 852 4540 4129

Password: 290167

Shabbat Morning, 10am - 12pm

Shabbat Morning Teaching

Meeting ID: 245 967 453

Password: 595703

Parashat Nitzavim-Vayeilech

Synopsis of the

Torah Portion

Deuteronomy 29:9 - 31:30

Synopsis of the Torah Portion Nitzavim

1. Establishing the covenant with all who are standing, ready to cross over into the land, and all previous generations.
2. Warning against idolatry and forsaking the covenant.
3. Eventual repentance and redemption; the “circumcision of the hearts.”
4. Torah is “not in heaven,” it is close to us; it is in our mouths and hearts.
5. The choice: life and blessing, or death and curse: choose life, love God, hearken to God, cleave unto God.

Synopsis of the Torah Portion VaYeilech

1. Moshe takes his leave; a final charge to be strong and courageous; God will not let go of us or forsake us.
2. Joshua, Moshe’s successor.
3. Writing of the Torah; public Torah reading every seven years.
4. Introduction to the final song/poem of Moshe; his final legacy before his death.

Synopsis of Haftarah

Isaiah 61:10 - 63:9

Selections from the Seventh (and last) Haftarah of Consolation – Sos Asis

61:10-11: 10. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. 11. For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

62:10-12: 10. Go through, go through the gates; prepare the way of the people; build up, build up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people. 11. Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the world, say to the daughter of Zion, behold, your salvation comes; behold, His reward is with Him, and His wages before Him. 12. And they shall call them, the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called, sought out, a city not forsaken.

Happy Birthday...

Ruth Broyde-Sharone on September 13.

Leanna Borys on September 18.

Stan Golden on September 18.

This Week We Remember...

Maryann Difatta,
mother of Cheryl Difatta, on September 13.

Betty Bachove,
grandmother of Stephen Grynberg, on September 14.

Paul Rothenberg,
nephew of Roger Fieldman, on September 15.

James Finley,
father of Rabbi Mordecai Finley, on September 18.

Upcoming Zoom Sessions

Hebrew Language & Skills with Meirav Finley

Saturdays at 1:30PM

Meeting ID: 983 5391 5367

Password: 828186

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PLEASE NOTE:

If you have something for the weekly update, material, as well as flyers, must be in the office by 4PM the preceding Monday!
