

Good Shabbos, everyone

Mazel Tov to our Executive Director, Shira Glickman, and her husband, Moshe, on the Bar Mitzva of their son Uri. May they see much continued nachas from Uri and all of their children!

Thank you to the sponsors of today's drasha:

- Mervyn and Adele Myers, in honor of Myron Froelich, who has been saying Kaddish on Mervyn's behalf for the Randallstown Synagogue Center and Yeshivat Rambam Yahrzeit Boards for several months. Myron's chesed is much appreciated.
- Hillel and Dena Soclof, in memory of Hillel's father, Avraham Abba Ben Shmaryahu, whose yahrzeit is the 27th of Elul. The neshama should have an aliya.
- Tommy and Judy Weiss "In honor of Rabbi Marwick, thank you for all your help."

Thank you to the sponsors for their support of the shul and may Hakadosh Baruch Hu reward them with bracha and *hatzlacha* and a year of health and happiness.

I want to again thank our President, Kenny Friedman; Vice President, Itzi Barr; Executive Director, Shira Glickman, and Seating Chairman, Avi Zuckerbrod, and all the others who have been working tirelessly to plan our Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur davening. They have literally put in months of work. I ask everyone to please be understanding and respectful of the circumstances and thankful that we are safe and healthy and have gotten this far and to continue to daven that our plans will come to fruition.

There has been a recent spike of Covid19 cases in our community. Because the schools have opened and children are interacting more, this is not surprising. Please, please be even more vigilant regarding social distancing, mask wearing, and hygiene. Also, please do not attend gatherings where these measures are not strictly implemented. May Hakadosh Baruch Hu keep us all safe!

As they do every year, the Council for the Enhancement of Tefilla has declared the Shabbos before Rosh Hashana as **Shabbos Iyun Tefilla**. This initiative was lovingly started and led by our longtime member, Mr. Harry Rashbaum z"l, who recently passed away, and is being continued by Yerachmiel Goldman. Its purpose is to make sure that we think about *tefilla* before Rosh Hashana. It is an appropriate time of the year to speak about *tefilla*, as we will spend much time in Shul over the coming weeks.

The issue I would like to deal with today is the **communal** aspect of **personal** prayer.

Tefilla is a very personal endeavor. **Rav Chaim Soloveitchik** famously comments that *tefilla* requires the understanding and realization that one is truly standing in front of Hashem, engaging in a private dialogue. Halacha reflects this understanding by requiring the *amida* to be said quietly and by restricting others from walking within four *amos* of one involved saying the *amida*.

Yet, as private as it is, we are encouraged to join with others in this task. Many parts of *tefilla* may be said only with a minyan present, and one who cannot daven with a minyan is encouraged to daven at the same time as the minyan—to join together with them—in spirit, if not in person.

Why? Our *parsha* provides an answer. On the Shabbos before Rosh Hashana, we always read Parshas Nitzavim. What is its relevant message for Rosh Hashana?

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם

Moshe tells the Jewish people: *You are standing here today, as a group, before Hashem, your God.*

The **Lubavitcher Rebbe**, zatzal, writes that the connection between Parshas Nitzvaim and Rosh Hashana is that the main preparation for Rosh Hashana is working on **achdus, unity.**

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם

He says that the Jewish people must understand that, in addition to being judged as individuals, we are judged on Rosh Hashana **as a people.**

As we have mentioned before, some *mefarshim* explain that the acronym of Elul is

איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים

The *mitzva* on Purim to connect to other Jews--spreading joy and hope to friends--remembering our connection to one another and sharing the burden and the pain of those in need.

As we approach the Yom Hadin, we must focus not only our dependence on Hashem, but also our dependence on each other.

זהר בראשית ס"ט:)—סגולה לזכות בדין—בתוך עמי אנכי יושבת—נצח ישראל

רבי אלעזר אמר בא וראה בשעה שדין שרוי בעולם לא יבקש אדם ישזכר שמו בעולם לפני הקב"ה, דאם יזכר שמו יבדקו בחובו ויבואו להשגיח בו. מנין משונמית. דאותו יום היה יום טוב של ראש השנה, והקב"ה דן את העולם, וכשאמר לה אלישע "היש לדבר לך אל המלך" זה הקב"ה שאז נקרא מלך מלך הקדוש מלך המשפט. ותאמר בתוך עמי אנכי יושבת. לא רוצה שיכירו אותי וישגיחו בו, אלא בתוך עמי אנכי יושבת. **מי שמכניס ראשו בין העם כולו לא ישגחו עליו לדונו לרע.**

The **Zohar** says that a special *segula* to succeed in the judgment of Rosh Hashana is to make sure you are part of the larger Jewish community. The Jewish people as a whole are assured that they will succeed in judgment. If one is connected to the community, he will merit that positive personal judgment as well.

The **Maharal** writes in *Netzach Yisrael* (ch. 44) **that an individual Jew can fully accept G-d's dominion only by identifying as part of the Jewish people as a whole.**

Man is not an island—not with regard to his place within his community and not with regard to his place in Jewish history, either.

Every Jew is part of a continuum. Our significance does not begin when we are born, and it does not end when we die. We believe in *netzach Yisrael*, the everlasting mission of the Jewish people. We believe each of us in *k'lal Yisrael* has a legacy that we can draw upon and that we hope to instill in future generations.

Hashem arranged the world in such a way that we need each other to succeed. No individual can perpetuate himself alone—as it says in **Breishis** (2:18) "*lo tov heyos ha'adam levado.*"

In the spiritual realm as well, not every *mitzvah* can be done by every Jew.

משך חכמה שמות פרק יט פסוק ח

(ח) ויענו כל העם יחדיו ויאמרו כל אשר דיבר ה' נעשה. הנה מצוות התורה יש אשר לכהנים ויש אשר ללויים ויש לכהן גדול ויש למלך או לסנהדרין, ויש למי שיש לו קרקע ובית, רק בכלל ישראל צריכה התורה להתקיים וכל ישראל ערבין זה לזה' (שבועות לט, א) ובקיומם כולן מקבלים שכר. . . וכל אחד צריך לקיים מצוה התלויה בו, ובכלותם הוא "אדם" שלם. . .

The **Meshech Chochma** writes that the Jewish people needed to be unified when they accepted the Torah, because the Torah can be kept in its entirety only by the Jewish people as a group. Some *mitzvos* are only for Kohanim, others are only for men, and still others are only for women. But as a nation, we can accept and fulfill the entire Torah.

We all must look out for the spiritual needs of our friends.

For that reason, we say *vidui* in the plural and the *amida*, the *Shmoneh Esrei*, is phrased in the plural. Furthermore, the Ariza"l said the *kavana* behind personal tefilla should be *v'ahavta l'raiecha kamocho*.

And Chazal write that an individual is granted **his** own wish **if he first prays for someone else**.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא קמא דף צב עמוד א
א"ל רבא לרבה בר מרי, מנא הא מילתא דאמור רבנן: כל המבקש רחמים על חבירו והוא צריך לאותו דבר, הוא נענה תחילה? א"ל, דכתיב: וה' שב את שבות איוב בהתפללו בעד רעהו. אמר ליה: את אמרת מהתם, ואנא אמינא מהכא: ויתפלל אברהם אל האלהים וירפא אלהים את אבימלך ואת אשתו ואמהותיו [וגו'], וכתוב: וה' פקד את שרה כאשר אמר וגו', כאשר אמר אברהם אל אבימלך.

A life lived thinking about others, therefore, is inherently a more valuable life. This is one of the goals in davening together with others, either in the same place or at the same time.

But Parshas Nitzavim also reminds us that man cannot let himself be lost in the *k'lal*, lost in the group.

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושוטריכם כל איש ישראל.

There is also a focus on *כל איש ישראל*—each individual as a separate entity. **The *k'lal* is made up of individuals**

The judgment on Rosh Hashana is also on the individual—his unique role within that *k'lal*. As the Mishna in Rosh Hashana (1:2) writes, everyone is judged *k'venei maron*—“individually.”

It takes a group of dedicated individuals to make up the communal entity called the Jewish people.

And to reflect that, tefilla is a personal dialogue—which we engage in alone—communicating directly with Hashem. It is a time to think about oneself and one's life—to judge oneself.

Rav Hirsch, commenting on the fact that the verb *lehispalel* [meaning, to pray] is in the reflexive form, translates להתפלל

“... *to infuse every aspect of one's being and existence with God's truth, and thus attain for oneself harmonious integrity of all of life by the light of God's countenance.*

[Rather] תפילה means infusing the heart with truths that come from outside oneself. עבודה is תפילה. *means to work on refining one's inner self, to elevate one's mind and heart to the lofty heights of recognition of truth and desire for serving God. If this were not the case, if תפילה were but an outpouring of our emotions, it would make no sense to have fixed times and fixed texts for our prayers. How could we assume that all the members of the community would be imbued with the same thoughts and the same emotions at certain predetermined times?*

Tefilla is a time to analyze ourselves and to make sure we are on the correct path.

Rav Kook, in his work on Aggadic texts, *Ein Ay"ta*, draws our attention to the significance of our posture in different contexts. He writes that, when we are working with other people to accomplish something, we separate our feet in order to move. However, when we daven, we must regroup, as it were, and think about where we are going. We bring the feet together—as a single unit—and focus inward.

He bases these two postures on a *pasuk* in *Sefer Tehillim*, perek 24:

מי יעלה בהר ה' ומי יקום במקום קדשו

Who will merit to ascend the Mountain of G-d and who will stand up in His holy place

David Hamelech stresses the importance of moving—ascending—*yaaleh*--to come close to G-d, but also of standing and strengthening oneself —*yakum*--in the service of G-d.

As part of our personal introspection, we must continuously ask ourselves: Is the observance of *mitzvos* changing us? Are we internalizing their message? Are we constantly thinking about our own mission and purpose and evaluating whether we are achieving it?

Tefilla is a time to analyze ourselves—and to see our dependence on God and on other human beings—our community.

*The story goes that a chasid presented R' Shneur Zalman of Lyadi, the **Ba'al HaTanya**, with a petition wherein he enumerated all his problems and his many unmet needs. After studying the petition, R' Shneur Zalman said, "it appears that you have spent much time clarifying what you need. Have you spent equal time clarifying why you are needed?"*

The greatest way to deserve a good judgment is to **make sure we are needed by God**. In our *tefillas*, we ask Hashem to give us life—for His own sake—committing to live properly
למעןך אלקים חיים

We tell God that our lives will be dedicated to Hashem and what He cares about—His *mitzvos* and His people. And in that merit we request life.

The **Maharal** (*Nesiv ha'Avoda* Perek 1) claims that this is, in fact, the way *tefilla* works. One might ask how requesting things from G-d is effective. If we do deserve something, it should not take prayer to make it come true. And if we do not deserve it, how does prayer change that? The Maharal writes that when we pray and we internalize our dependence on God and our responsibilities, it changes us as individuals —and thereby makes us worthy of that for which we pray.

Tefilla is about changing ourselves by realizing our relationship with G-d and our complete dependence on Him.

But more than that, *tefilla* is intended to show God that He can depend on us.

Seen in this light, *tefilla* is a time to refocus and regroup as individuals. But, ultimately, we as individuals make up the greater *k'lal*. And that is why all prayer is enhanced by a group setting. **This reminds us that the individual destiny we are focused on during prayer is linked to others.**

אתם נצבים היום כולכם. . כל איש ישראל

Each of us must dedicate ourselves to the community, and the community requires committed and trusted individuals.

As we approach the Yom Hadin, may we internalize the message of *tefilla*, and Jewish unity. May Hashem help us all be *zoche ba'din* and inscribe all of us in the *Sefer Hachaim*, so we can all leave our mark on this world, and make this world a better place...amen.

Wishing everyone a *k'siva v'chasima tova* and a year of good health and happiness, *bracha* and *hatzlacha*!