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**The Rebuke and the**

**Unhappy Shoe Salesman**

**By**[**Rena S. Goldzweig**](https://www.chabad.org/search/keyword_cdo/kid/10443/jewish/Goldzweig-Rena.htm)



**Artwork from the Rivka Korf Studio**

 Ted is a shoe salesman. All day he meets customers, asks their shoe size, goes to the back of the store and brings them pairs to try on. Then he trudges away with those that don’t fit and returns with yet another pile for the customer to try on. Again and again, all day long. He is so tired; he keeps stealing glances at the big clock on the wall. He wants to go home.

 Robert has also been working hard all day, bringing shoes to customers and putting back the ones that don’t fit. But he doesn’t trudge; he leaps! When the clock shows closing time, he doesn’t rush out the door. He stays and sweeps up, even though it’s not part of his job.

**Both Did the Exact Same Thing All Day**

 Ted and Robert both did the exact same thing all day. Why is one so tired, the other still bright and fresh? Ted can’t wait to go home; Robert is looking for more ways to help out.

 Dig a little deeper and we find out that Ted is an employee, while Robert is the owner’s son.

 Ah, now we can understand them both.

 There is no explicit commandment in the Torah to be joyous, yet one who fulfills the commandments begrudgingly fails to appreciate G‑d’s great kindness.

The Torah reading of Ki Tavo includes a section commonly referred to as “The Rebuke,” describing many terrible calamities that G‑d will—Heaven forefend—bring upon us if we fail to fulfill our mission in this world:

 … because you did not serve the L‑rd, your G‑d, with happiness and with gladness of heart, when [you had an] abundance of everything.1

 This verse is usually understood to mean that the Jew nation didn’t observe the Torah’s commandments happily, even though they lived in a time of plenty. The Holy Ari, Rabbi Yitzchak Luria, however, explains the verse to mean that the Jewish people would be severely punished because they didn’t serve G‑d with a joyful heart. Yes, they served G‑d faithfully, studying Torah and fulfilling its commandments, but as a tiresome chore—not joyously, in a fashion befitting the child of the King.

**Time to Take a Closer Look at Ourselves**

 It’s time to take a closer look at ourselves. Are we a Ted, serving G‑d like an employee punching the clock? Or are we a Robert, serving Him like one of His beloved children, which we indeed are?

 Moreover, who do the commandments benefit, after all? The Almighty doesn’t need our subservience; we can’t add anything at all to His magnificence. The Torah is His beneficence to us, affording us an opportunity to refine ourselves and to be embraced by His Holy Presence.

 Do we look at G‑d’s commandments as responsibilities and chores? Or do we see a mitzvah as another opportunity to become closer to Him? Chassidic thought teaches that the word mitzvah comes from the root *tzavta*, meaning “together.” The King is giving us an opportunity to come close to him, and we shrug our shoulders. We’re tired, we’re busy, we haven’t yet sat down in a comfortable armchair to read the news.

 G‑d can wait a bit, we think:

 My beloved is knocking [G‑d is entreating]:

 ‘Open for me, my sister, my beloved, my dove, my perfect one.’

 [But the Jew replies:]

 ‘I have taken off my tunic; how can I put it on? I have bathed my feet; how can I soil them?’2

 But those who view themselves as the King’s beloved children fulfill the commandments with joy and exuberance, expending time and energy, sparing no expense to do His will.

**FOOTNOTES**

[1.](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/4853566/jewish/The-Rebuke-and-the-Unhappy-Shoe-Salesman.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef1a4853566) [Deuteronomy 28:47](https://www.chabad.org/9992#v47).

[2.](https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/4853566/jewish/The-Rebuke-and-the-Unhappy-Shoe-Salesman.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnoteRef2a4853566) [Song of Songs 5:2](https://www.chabad.org/16449#v2)-3.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Tavo 5780 email of Chabad.Org Magazine.*

*Reprinted from the August 26, 2020 website of Matzav.com*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Nitzavim-Vayelech**

**By Rabbi Berel Wein**

 The very two words that signify the titles of the two portions of the Torah that we will hear in the synagogue this Shabbat are, at first glance, contradictory. Nitzavim signifies a solid stance, and unwavering presence, and a commanding appearance. It reflects an unchanging nature, and the necessary ability to stand one's ground. no matter what the circumstances of life.

 On the other hand, the word Vayelech signifies motion, progress, change and a forward thrust in behavior and concepts. It seems that these two Torah readings cancel each other out, for one signifies unchanging steadfastness while the other champions progress, change and motion. Such an understanding of Torah and Judaism is very superficial and erroneous.

**The Two Traits Complement Each Other**

 Rather, the two traits indicated in the opening words of these two Torah readings essentially complement each other. They do not come to point out a disagreement, one with another, but to point out that Judaism requires both traits to be present within every Jewish individual and the Jewish people as a whole, in order that Torah and tradition will survive and prosper in Jewish society.

 An important and necessary part of our Jewish character and that of Jewish society, is our stubbornness – our refusal to abandon what we have been commanded by the L-rd to observe and practice. This commitment can never be modified or adjusted, acceding to the passing social norms, and changing human mores.

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**Rabbi Berel Wein**

**Acceptable Human Behavior and**

**Ideas Can Rapidly Change**

 We are witness, in our times, how quickly acceptable human behavior and ideas can rapidly change, so that what was unthinkable and perverse a few short decades ago is today not only acceptable, but behavior that should be championed, admired, and, in some cases, even enforced legally against ones wishes.

 At the same time, Jewish society cannot remain eternally frozen and incapable of adjustment to new situations and differing societal changes. Our recent experience with the Coronavirus, with the various halachic responses to it concerning prayer services, study sessions and personal behavior, testify to the adaptability that the Torah and Jewish tradition, dating back to Sinai, has built-in in order to be able to deal with all possible situations, no matter how unforeseen.

**The Question of How to**

**Achieve a Proper Balance**

 The only question that remains is how to achieve a proper balance between Nitzavim and Vayelech. We are witness to the fact that helter-skelter progress and the adoption of new norms leads to spiritual destruction and is an enormous danger to Jewish survival. On the other hand, we certainly need to recognize that 21st-century Israel or the United States is not the same as 19th century eastern and central Europe.

 Every individual, as well as every group within Jewish society, must feel its way slowly and carefully, to try and find the proper balance that fits them, and allows them to retain the blessings of tradition and faithfulness, while still dealing with current problems and situations. Understandably, this process is an ongoing one, and it is one of great delicacy and nuance. Nevertheless, it is part of our drive for eternity and the enhancement of our religious society.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Rabbiwein.com*

## Thoughts that Count

 So that the generation to come of your children that will rise up after you, and the alien that will come from a far land...will say (Deut. 29:21)

 This awesome prophecy refers to the last generation of Jews at the End of Days, in the era of the Redemption, whose knowledge of Torah and Judaism will unfortunately be the same as a total stranger's. *(Rabbi Chaim of Brisk)*

 The anger of G-d burned against this land... and G-d rooted them out of the land in anger... and cast them into another land (Deut. 29:26-27)

 The curses and punishments enumerated in this section of the Torah are merely warnings, not promises that G-d must fulfill. Their purpose is to arouse the heart of man to choose good over evil so that they will never come to pass. *(Peninei HaGeula)*

*Reprinted from the Parshat Nitzavim 5755 edition of the L’Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization. Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Vol. 29*

**Parshas Nisavim**

**If Only I Had Wings to Fly**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheSmuz.com**



“*It is not in the heavens for you to say, ‘Who can ascend to the heaven for us and take it for us so that we can listen to it and perform it?’. . . Rather the matter is very near to you, in your mouth and your heart, to perform it*.” – Devarim 30:12-14

 After many grave warnings against leaving the ways of the Torah, Moshe Rabbeinu tells the Klal Yisroel that learning and keeping the Torah is within easy grasp of each of us. “Acquiring it doesn’t require wings to fly to the heavens, and studying it doesn’t demand crossing oceans.” Rather, Torah is well within the reach of each person.

 Rashi, in commenting on the words, “**It is not in the heavens,”** adds the explanation: “For if it were in the heavens, you would be obligated to go up after it to learn it.”

**If Only I Had Wings to Fly**

 This Rashi is difficult to understand. Rashi’s role in Chumash is to clarify what the Torah means. As an aid to understanding, he may use examples and parables, but the goal is always to explain the pshat — the straightforward meaning of the posuk.

 Not only doesn’t this comment help us understand what the Torah is telling us-- it isn’t true. Since time immemorial man has dreamed about flying, but man cannot sprout wings and fly. How can the Torah expect the impossible from us? And even more, this explanation is the opposite of what the Torah is trying to tell us. The entire paragraph outlines how close the Torah is and how easy it is to attain it. What is Rashi trying to teach us with his comment, “If it were in the heavens, you would be obligated to go up after it to learn it?”

 The answer to this can best be understood with a moshol:

**An amazing feat of strength**

 In 1997 in Tallahassee, Florida, a young boy was involved in an accident, and ended up being pinned under the wheel of a car. Rescuers couldn’t help him; he was trapped. An onlooker, seeing the danger, rushed over, and almost without thinking, reached for the fender of the car, lifted it off the ground, and freed the boy – a feat of amazing strength.

 The unusual part of the story is that the hero, the one who lifted the car, was not a trained emergency professional or some big burly fireman, but rather the boy’s 63-year-old grandmother who had never before lifted anything heavier than a bag of dog food.

 The story became a media sensation and Dr. Charles Garfield, the author of a book of fantastic sports feats entitled Peak Performance, decided he wanted to interview her. However, she wasn’t interested in talking to him. She wouldn’t return his calls, and she did everything she could to avoid discussing the event. Finally, Dr. Garfield, being a convincing fellow, got her to agree to a meeting, and the reason she was reluctant to discuss the act turned out to be almost as amazing as the event itself.

 During the discussion, the grandmother said she didn’t like to talk about the incident because it challenged her beliefs about what she could and could not do — about what was possible. “**If I was able to do this, when I didn’t think it was possible, what does that say about the rest of my life? Have I wasted it?”**

 After further discussion, Dr. Garfield asked her what she would like to do. She explained that she had never had the opportunity to further her education after high school. So after some coaching, Mrs. Laura Shultz began college at the age of 63. She received her degree and then went on to teach science in a community college.

**Our Attitude Determines our Altitude**

 This story is illustrative of a very human tendency. Our understanding of what is and what is not possible creates imagined ceilings of opportunity for us. If I were smarter, I would have…If I were more talented, I could have…but I just can’t do it. Yet some people, who aren’t any more talented, who weren’t given all the breaks, just seem to plow through and somehow make the seemingly impossible happen. It almost seems that their attitude is their single greatest asset.

**Eyes on the Prize**

 This seems to be the answer to this Rashi. The Torah isn’t telling us that we need to sprout wings and fly. Rather, this is a moshol for the drive that a person must have to succeed. If a person’s attitude is, “Whatever it takes. No mountain is too high, no obstacle too difficult. If it were up in the heavens, I would fly there,” then he will reach heights. However, if that enthusiasm is lacking, no matter how close the Torah is, he will not acquire it.

 You don’t need to fly to the skies, but you need be ready to. Once that drive is in place, nothing can stop you.

 No matter what a person’s natural capacity and life circumstances, if he sets his goal as the attainment of Torah, HASHEM will help so that he can reach the stars. Is the journey difficult? While there are many challenges along the way, the ways of the Torah are pleasant, and a Jew has unique aptitude to absorb it.

 The only difficult part is setting our sights high enough and holding the course. However, if a person sets out with a drive to do whatever it takes, even if it means “flying to the heavens,” then HASHEM helps, and that person can reach his personal level of greatness on par with the greatest of Torah giants.

*Reprinted from this week’s website on TheShmuz.com This is an excerpt from the [Shmuz on the Parsha book](https://theshmuz.com/product/shmuz-on-the-parsha-book/).*

**More Thoughts that Count**

 G-d will circumcise your heart... in order that you may live (Deut. 30:6)

When G-d will circumcise your heart, the pleasure and delight that you will take in Torah and mitzvot will be as keenly felt as the pleasures of the physical body; you will love the Torah as much as you value your very life. *(Ohel Yaakov)*

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**The Circumcision of the Jewish Heart and Our Love for G-d**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



 In this week's Torah portion, Nitzavim, G-d makes a covenant with the Jewish people just prior to their entering the land of Israel. After enumerating the troubles that will befall them in exile if they sin, G-d promises that He will ultimately bring them the true and complete Redemption.

**G-d’s Pledge of Redemption**

 A closer study of these verses reveals that G-d's pledge of Redemption actually contains two distinct promises: One, that every single Jew will eventually do teshuva (return to G-d). The second, that as part of the Final Redemption, "The L-rd your G-d will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul."

 The sequence of these promises, however, is problematic.

 Maimonides explains that the first step in the process of Redemption is repentance: "The Torah has promised that when Israel does teshuva at the end of the exile they will be redeemed immediately." But if the Redemption will have already occurred, what can possibly be added by this "circumcision of the heart"? Furthermore, what does the phrase itself really mean?

 In order to understand, we need to examine the two ways a Jew can remain distant from Torah and mitzvot: The first occurs from within, when the heart itself becomes "opaque" -- impervious to G-dliness. The second factor is external, the result of outside negative influences, as our Sages stated, "The eye sees, and the heart desires."

**Entirely Within the**

**Person’s Ability to Control**

 The first factor is entirely within the person's ability to control. Every Jew has the power to open his heart to G-d; all he needs to have is the will. This is the mitzva of teshuva, which every person must do for himself. The second factor, however, is entirely up to G-d. A person cannot will himself not to be tempted by things he finds alluring.

 This, then, is what is meant by the "circumcision of the heart" that will take place after the Redemption:

 Once the Jewish people will have done teshuva to the best of their ability, G-d will "circumcise" our hearts, i.e., the connection between what our eyes see and our subsequent desire to sin will be severed. In this second stage of the Messianic era, the very possibility of external influences exerting a negative pull will be permanently abolished.

**Uncovering Our Innate and**

**Essential Love for G-d**

 Moreover, this "circumcision" will serve to uncover the innate and essential love every Jew has for G-d, enabling us "to love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul" without impediment, either internal or external. Thus we will reach a state not only of physical Redemption, but of spiritual Redemption from everything that once obscured the true, underlying G-dly reality.

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**Getting Ready for the**

**Day of Judgement**

**By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**



 As we get closer and closer to Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment, we try to prepare ourselves in every possible way. Of course, we engage in the making of a cheshbon hanefesh, a personal accounting, so that we may determine areas in which we need to do teshuvah, repentance, and other areas in which we need to improve.

 We also try to find projects of compassion and kindness, for the Gemora tells us, “Kol hamracheim al habrios, merachamin alov min HaShamayim – Whoever has mercy on his fellow man will be shown mercy from Heaven.” We also should muster the courage and strength to forgive those who have wronged us, for it is the Divine way to judge midah kneged midah, measure for measure. Therefore, if we look away from the misdeeds of others, Hashem then will likewise look away from our sins.

 Prayer is also most effective at this time of the year. As we know, Elul is an acronym for “Ani L’Dodi V’Dodi li – I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me.” This means that if we attempt to come close to Hashem, Our Beloved, He reciprocates in full measure. Prayer is one of the most direct ways to come close to Hashem. At this time of the year, we should ask Hashem that He rev-up our teshuvah motors, as when we say in the Shemone Esrei ‘V’hachazireinu b’tshuvah shleima lifonecha – Give us the impetus to return to You in perfect repentance.”

 We should also ask Hashem for forgiveness heavily in the Shemone Esrei bracha of ‘s’lach lonu.’ We should pray, too, for the knowledge to know what needs to be improved and for what needs to be changed in the bracha, ‘Atah chonein laadom daas.’ And, when we say these prayers, we should not restrict them solely to ourselves. Rather, we should pray that others as well should be motivated to repent and better themselves.

 Thus far, we have looked at two of the three ingredients that repeal any evil decrees – for like we say in Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur liturgy, “U’Tshuvah, u’Tefilah, u’Tzedakah maavirin es roah ha-gezeirah.” We’ve talked about repentance, and we’ve covered prayer. Now let’s take a serious look at the third ingredient, tzedakah.

 The Gemora teaches us that “Tzedakah tatzil mimoves – Charity saves one from death.” This is particularly important when we pray for life on the Yom HaDin, the Day of Judgment. Since Rosh Hashanah is also the time when Hashem distributes our annual income, it behooves us to beef up on our tzedakah output, for the Torah promises us “Aser t’aser – You shall surely give tithes,” which the Gemora homiletically explains “Aser bishvil shetisasher – Give tithes and you will become wealthy”.

 At this point one might wonder “Wait a minute! I know a lot of people who diligently give charity and are not wealthy! To the contrary, they are still struggling.”

 This question is dealt with in several ways by a variety of commentators. The Chofetz Chaim explains that while a person might give charity, he doesn’t get the Divine reward of wealth unless he gives in proportion to his means.

 Thus, when there is an Hatzolah appeal in shul and everyone, rich and poor alike, calls out one hundred dollars, this is not the proper spirit of tzedakah. As an example, the Chofetz Chaim cites the daughter of Nakdimon Ben Gurion who was found picking barleycorns out of dung in order to survive. The Gemora asks how such a thing could have happened to the daughter of a great philanthropist. The Gemora answers that indeed Nakdimon gave a lot – but not according to his ability.

 The Marchazu, in his response, answers that one isn’t rewarded with wealth unless he gives his charity happily. As the Torah says, “Lo yeirah levovcha bsidcha lo – Let it not hurt your heart when you give charity to him.”

 This is indeed a great challenge for many people for, although we do give money when people knock on the door, call on the phone, or ask us in shul, too often we give it grudgingly or with a frown. In order to receive Divine reward, we need to train ourselves to give tzedakah with a smile.

 My favorite answer is the explanation of the Haflaah. He explains that the blessings of wealth for giving charity are not apparent in the bank book or in one’s investment portfolio. He quotes the Gemora which says that the reward will be ‘shetisasher,’ one will become ‘asher,’ wealthy.

 The Mishna says in Pirkei Avos, “Eizehu ashir? Hasomeiach b’chelko – Who is wealthy? He who is satisfied with his lot.” Thus, concludes the Haslah, the reward of charity is a sense of satisfaction and wellbeing. This is indeed the prophecy in Malachi – that for giving charity, Hashem will open up the skylight in Heaven, “V’harikosi lachem bracha ad bli dai,” which the Gemora explains to mean that Hashem will shower reward upon the Baal Tzedakah until his lips will tire from saying enough. This, the Haflaah says, is a poetic way of expressing an attitude of fulfillment and wellbeing.

 In the zechus of our multi-pronged attempts to get ready for the Day of Judgment, may Hashem bless us all a kasiva v’chasima tova u’mesukah, that we be written down and sealed for a good and sweet year.

*Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Savo 5780 email of the Jewish VUES.*

**The Eve of Rosh Hashana**

 As a young boy, the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak, asked his father, the Rebbe Rashab, what he was supposed to be doing on the day before Rosh Hashana.

 "We recite Psalms the whole day long and feel remorse for our misdeeds of the past year, so that by the time evening falls and the new year begins, we are free of all our bad habits," his father replied.

**Apple and Honey**

 On the first night of Rosh Hashana the apple, dipped in honey, is eaten after the HaMotzei is said on the challah. The brief prayer, "May it be Your will that You renew for us a good and sweet year," is said after the blessing over the apple (Baruch Ata Ado-noy Elo- haynu Melech HaOlam Borei P'ree Ha'eitz) but before eating the apple.

 On the second night of Rosh Hashana, immediately after Kiddush over wine and before washing the hands for the meal the blessing shehecheyanu is recited over a new fruit and then eaten. *(The Book of Chabad-Lubavitch Customs)*

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**Wimbledon Doubles Champion Angela Buxton Dies, Aged 85**

**By Simon Rocker**

***Injury put paid to a career of huge promise - and her non-admission to the All England Club remained a matter of controversy***



**Angela Buxton (left) with her tennis doubles partner Althea Gibson**

 Angela Buxton at last year's US Open, where she spoke at the unveiling of a sculpture of Althea Gibson (Photo: Getty Images)

 Britain’s most famous Jewish sportswoman, Wimbledon doubles champion Angela Buxton, died at the weekend a day before her 86th birthday.

 Although she was defeated in the Wimbledon singles final in 1956 – the first British player to reach the singles’ final since 1939 – she went on to take the doubles title with the American Althea Gibson.

 The pair had won the French Open a few weeks earlier where Gibson had become the first black player to win a major championship by taking the singles’ title.

 The *JC* reported at the time that no player in the world had “risen so quickly” as the 21-year-old Buxton and experts believed her appearance in a Wimbledon final would not be her last.

 But a serious wrist injury cut her short her career and she was forced to retire the following year.

**Denied Admission to the Exclusive All England Club**

 Her non-admission to the exclusive All England Club, however, remained a controversy more than 60 years later.



 **Angela Buxton at last year's US Open, where she spoke at the unveiling of a sculpture of Althea Gibson (Photo: Getty Images)**

 Writing in the *JC* last month, David Berry, author of *A People’s History of Tennis*, noted: “ It was — and is — customary for the All England Club to reward British success at Wimbledon by offering life membership of the club. Despite Buxton’s achievements, she was put on a waiting list for membership.”

 Last year, Buxton told *The Times*: “It’s an unfortunate example of how the British really treat Jews in this country.”

 She said that when she had last inquired about her membership back in 1988, the club had claimed she had refused it – which she denied.

 A Wimbledon spokeswoman told the newspaper: “While the decision-making process for membership of the All England Club is a private matter, we strongly refute any suggestion that race or religion plays a factor.”

**Supported Her Partner When She Fell on Hard Times**

 When a statue of Gibson was unveiled at the US Open last year, Buxton was honoured for promoting her partner’s career and supporting her when she later fell on hard times.

 Born in Liverpool in 1934, she began playing the game in South Africa where she spent the war years with her mother and brother. After the war, she went to a boarding school, Gloddaeth Hall, in Llandudno, North Wales, where her promise was recognised.

 But when as a teenager, she applied to join one of the country’s top clubs, Cumberland Lawn Tennis Club in Hampstead, she was told they didn’t take Jews.

She won a gold medal at the Maccabiah Games in 1953 and was one of the first to be inducted into the International Jewish Sports Hall in Netanya in 1981.

 Despite her premature retirement, she remained connected to the game, writing several books on tennis and opening a centre in Hampstead Garden Suburb, where a young John Bercow was one of her pupils.

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