

YOMIM NORAIM 5784

KEHILLAT SHIVTEI YISRAEL

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YOUTH DIVREI TORAH

STARTING ON PG. 33

"Singing connects us to our innermost selves, to our roots & to one another. Singing focuses us, unites us & draws us closer to Hashem."

RABANIT ETTA BENDAVID, PG. 8



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בברכת שנה טובה וחתימה טובה

ALON & MELANIE RONEN AND FAMILY

BY ANDY ALBUM, CHAIRMAN

CIVIL WAR IN ISRAEL?

It will surely go down in Jewish history as a period that will never be forgotten. Just a few decades after Am Yisrael successfully returned to Eretz Yisrael, after too many years in exile, unity turned to division. A united people, Am Echad, was replaced by tribes at loggerheads with each other. The rhetoric turned violent, with genuine fears of civil war. Division and schisms cast a shadow over our land and our people.

I am sure you will agree that the latter period of the Judges, over 3000 years ago, really was a terrible time in our history, culminating in the rape of the concubine in Gibeah and the resultant civil war against the tribe of Benjamin. Sefer Shoftim says of this dark period, with its final words, 'Every man did what was right in his eyes.' The problem was that too many people failed to understand what was 'right'.

From these few words and from a different story from the time of the Judges, I'm drawing my own inspiration as we enter 5784. And that comes from the lessons to be learned from Ruth and Boaz, which happened during this very same period of conflict and failing three millennia ago.

These have been a few tumultuous months for Israeli society. Whatever your views on the subject, I think the reality is that none of us can individually repair the current ill feeling and hostility in Israeli society. But we can learn from Ruth and Boaz.

Irrespective of what is happening around us, we should remember that the path to geulah is not to do what we think is right, but that we should do **what is the right thing to do.**

Irrespective of what was going on around them, Ruth and Boaz focused on what was right – incredible commitment, unbending loyalty, immense chesed to those less fortunate, constantly adhering to the highest midot and recognizing HaShem's role in the countless blessings that are bestowed upon us. I'm going to try and make that my focus in the coming year.



“We should remember that the path to geulah is not to do what we think is right, but that we should do what is the right thing to do.”

These values are at the core of the DNA of Shivtei Yisrael, a kehilla that I really have been uniquely blessed to be the chairman of for the past three years. The endless energy that Rabbi Bendavid, Rabbanit Etta, Rav Dani, Sonya and our amazing committee have shown has allowed us to grow and thrive in 5783.

Now we start 5784, a year that holds out so much promise for our kehilla. Our tefillot will be enhanced in our beautiful new main shul sanctuary, our youth will be inspired by the addition of Rav Doron Chitiz to our great team, there will be more opportunities for all of us to embrace every aspect of our shul's life in the coming months.

My tefilla is that we will all draw the lessons of Ruth and Boaz. What we can change, what we can impact is how we act. If we draw on their inspiration and follow their example, then Im Yirtze HaShem it will be a year when divisions are put aside and in unity we will successfully complete our journey to the ultimate geulah.

Wishing you and your families a Shana Tova uMetuka.

BY RABBI EITAN BENDAVID

SHIVTEI PUTS ON A NEW FACE

It's a new year and we've got a newly refurbished shul. Now what?

Refurbishing our main sanctuary is an exciting moment in our community's history. But in the spirit of King Solomon, who wonders, "will God really dwell on earth" after completing the Temple, we must ask ourselves, what is the true meaning of this structural refurbishment? After all, a shul is a physical edifice made of brick and stone - what exactly are the spiritual ramifications? Does aesthetic beauty necessarily translate into spiritual elevation?

Let me share with you some initial thoughts about this new change, by drawing upon a halakhic concept called פנים חדשות - literally, new faces. פנים חדשות appears in a number of different contexts in halakha. Let us focus on its manifestation in a wedding and a house of mourning.

The Talmud Bavli Ketuvot 7a quotes two opinions about when שבע ברכות are recited after a wedding - תנו רבנן מברכין ברכת חתנים בעשרה כל שבעה. אמר - רב יהודה - והוא שבאו פנים חדשות שבע ברכות, whereas Rav Yehuda argues that in order to recite שבע ברכות each evening, one needs פנים חדשות - new guests to arrive.

But what exactly are פנים חדשות and why is there inclusion significant? Rashi argues that פנים חדשות are new attendees who were not part of the previous wedding celebrations. Tosfot is more specific in his definition - אין קורא אלא בבני אדם - שמרבים בשבילם השמחה יותר. The "new faces" must bring an added level of simcha to the bride and groom in order to generate the requirement to recite שבע ברכות. Tosfot's explanation answers a fundamental question about this Talmudic debate. Why is there a need to recite the שבע ברכות again at all? Was the wedding celebration not enough?! Apparently, the presence of new guests recreates a sense of joy for the couple. It is as if the wedding is happening all over again. The new guests act as



“This refurbishment beckons us to take a fresh look at our shul, our community & ourselves in order to raise our community to new spiritual heights.”

a mirror to the young couple. They intensify or deepen the already joyous occasion by their mere presence and this necessitates the recitation of שבע ברכות all over again.

The role of פנים חדשות in a house of mourning is equally significant. Talmud Bavli Moed Katan 21a teaches us that a mourner is prohibited from donning tefillin during the first days of the mourning process because tefillin are associated with glory and dignity which is alien to the mourner's tragic loss. According to one opinion - Rav Yehoshua, the mourner may not don tefillin only on the first day of mourning. However, if on the second day of mourning, new guests arrive to comfort the mourner, he must remove his tefillin, as if he has walked back time to the first day of mourning. The mere presence of new guests brings the mourner back to the beginning of the mourning process. There is a return to an earlier state, or an intensification of the mourning as a result of the new guests who come to hear the story of loss and pain of the mourner.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - NEW FACE

These two models are instructive with regards to the refurbishment of our Beit Knesset. The "new face" of our physical structure does not fundamentally change anything. We are still the same community with the same individual members. And yet, this פנים חדשות - this new face, intensifies our awareness of our communal space. It causes us to see things we might not have seen in the past, to imagine a new future together, or to re-examine the core values that shape our community. At the very least, it evokes a response; it shakes things up.

I think both of these models are instructive. This "new face" demands that we strengthen our bonds with the path and recognize the great dedication and sacrifice of community members who came before us. Where would we be today without their dedication, love, and leadership? At the same time, like a newly-married couple, this new change intensifies our commitment to our future - the next generation.

What must we do to make sure they are ready to take on the mantle of Jewish leadership when the time comes? This refurbishment beckons us to take a fresh look at our shul, our community, and ourselves in order to raise our community to new spiritual heights.

May we prove ourselves worthy of this great gift we have received to renew our מנדש מעט.

May we be merited to have God's presence dwell in our sanctuary.

May Hashem answer all our tefillot
שימלאו כל משאלות לבנו לטובה!

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david.bagraim@stonehagefleming.com
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CLEARING THE AIR

Why does Sukkot come after Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur? Why do we follow up this intense period of teshuva and kapara with the party-like Yom Simchateinu? Isn't it a stark change of direction?

For a hint, let's look at Adam ha-Rishon. What was Adam's first reaction when God came looking for him after he sinned? Most people would say he "passed the buck" – he blamed Chava/Eve. But that's not the entire truth. The FIRST reaction Adam had when God came looking for him wasn't verbal. His first reaction was to HIDE. Hashem has to call out "where are you!?" So, why did he hide? Adam claims it was because he was naked, but why would that matter to God?

Let's use a metaphor to try to understand. Imagine a happily married couple. They've had their ups and downs but generally they're in an okay place. They decide to schedule a super-vacation. They're going to travel the world – Italy, the Alps, Alaska, Disneyworld, South African Safari, the Eiffel Tower – the works! They plan it in weeks, even months, in advance. As the day approaches, their excitement grows more and more intense. It's really going to give them a chance to fall in love all over again, and have a good time doing it. Then, suddenly, two weeks before the first flight date, a fight breaks out. Over something petty and silly no doubt, but as many marital fights do, it brings out the worst in them, and they dredge up all the garbage and stupidity that they've ever had a disagreement about. Things are said that cannot be unsaid. Dishes are smashed, and parents get brought into the discussion. It's not pretty.

The fight drags on for hours, but it feels like days. And indeed, in the days following, things don't get resolved, they simply get swept under the rug. No sincere apologies are offered, and none are accepted. Then, before you know it, the vacation date arrives. Well, they paid for it, so they might as well enjoy it. So, they go on the vacation. And it's everything they dreamed of. The Alps are pristine, Disneyworld is magical, and Alaska is...really cold. They pull it all off exactly as planned. Only one problem.



"When Hashem comes looking for us, let's be present and accountable, even if it means being uncomfortably vulnerable."

They can't look at each other the whole time. They can't get over the fight. The tension is palpable, and it infects every experience, every moment. There is no joy. There is no togetherness. They are having an incredible external experience, but internally, each one is seething and despairing. Each spouse alternates between anger and shame. Each one thinks "Why don't I just apologize and be done with it?", but neither one is willing to take that step. Why not?

It's very hard to enter into that kind of vulnerability. To admit that you might be wrong and have been the guilty party in some way. It's scary. No one likes to think of themselves as the bad guy.

On the other hand, if you've ever had one of those conversations – where you really open up and put everything on the table – there's nothing more connective than that. Both sides apologize, and they are closer because of it. That's the irony.

Back to Adam in the garden. Adam hides because he is ashamed. He cannot be with God at this moment. He is too conflicted inside. And he isn't ready to admit what he's done. In fact, he feels naked – embarrassed and uncomfortable.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - CLEARING THE AIR

Hashem tells him, we cannot continue like this. I refuse to continue our time in Gan Eden without clearing the air. This vacation is over.

Sukkot is meant to be a party with Hashem. Therefore it cannot be before Yom Kippur. Too much gunk has built up in our relationship with God over the year. In order to truly enjoy it, we have to be cleansed beforehand. All the damage and detritus of our laziness, anger, apathy, selfishness has to be washed away first. In order for Sukkot to be more than just a formal vacation, in order for us to truly connect with God through joy and celebration, we have to first plunge into the uncomfortably cold waters of teshuva. Be willing to be vulnerable and wrong, stare into the mirror and see our mistakes, acknowledge and admit them, and then resolve to repair them.

Let's not repeat Adam's mistake - the one he made AFTER he sinned. When Hashem comes looking for us, let's be present and accountable, even if it means being uncomfortably vulnerable. That way, Yom Simchateinu will be a day of unfettered joy, where we don't have to look away from our beloved, and we can sincerely celebrate.



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BY RABBANIT ETTA BENDAVID

SING OUT & ANSWER THE CALL OF YOUR SOUL

As I write this, Tisha b'Av has just passed and the intensity that accompanies the Yamim Nora'im hovers once again. I take an accounting of the year gone by and look toward the new year with a flutter of emotions, reflecting on my gratitude, loss, hopes and fears. Add into this mix the element of teshuva, which confronts us on Tisha b'Av. After all, the day on which we acknowledge our estrangement from the Divine, that is when we recognize our yearning to draw close to Hashem once again.

And so, here we now stand throughout Elul and the Yamim Noraim, drawing close to God, to one another, to our families, our community, to the calling of our own souls. Or, at least attempting to draw close. This is what spirituality really is, after all. The foundation of our theology is focusing on the brit (covenant), the relationship between us and Hashem and living in a way that compels us, enables us, to draw close to that relationship. It is from this place of yearning and seeking that I write.

Every year we are reminded that turning back to God (teshuvah), speaking directly to God (tefillah) and giving to others (tzedaka) will overturn a negative decree. (I'll add that hearing God speak to us through Talmud Torah may do this too.) These practices will redeem us and bring our relationships, our priorities into proper perspective. In fact, we learn that when we do teshuva, those mistakes we made are transformed into mitzvot. How beautiful when these encounters indeed elevate us and our connections. How meaningful when the words we utter in the machzor open our hearts to the deepest place within ourselves. And yet, if we do them by rote or without true understanding, we may be left wondering still: how do I draw close?

This year, more than ever, I have found the answer in the power and practice of song. Singing is connection. From the deepest parts of our being, as the breath turns to voice, our individual and collective sighing will be what draws us closer to Hashem and to one another.



"Singing connects us to our innermost selves, to our roots & to one another. Singing focuses us, unites us & draws us closer to Hashem."

Music brings us to a level of heightened transcendence. Singing [re]connects us to ourselves, to others, to Hashem. It stirs our memories. Through song we channel our emotions and concerns, we turn pain to purpose. Those of you with appreciation for music will understand what I'm speaking about. For those of us, however, who are reluctant to join in singing for fear we may sound bad or because of distractions - I want to encourage you to sing this year. I encourage all of us to let the music of the Yamim Noraim move us to draw closer to Hashem, to those around us.

This is a particularly poignant proposal for Rosh Hashanah this year when the first day will be on Shabbat and we will therefore not have the shofar to stir us with its wordless, penetrating cry. Instead, let us become the voice of the shofar. And, just as the shofar is meant to pierce through us and echo in the heavens simultaneously, may our voices move us all from fear to awe, from judgment to compassion, from exile to redemption.

As we move from Selichot to Yom Kippur, we are commanded to afflict our souls, וְעָנִיתָ אֶת-נַפְשְׁתֶּיךָ, while we plead with Hashem to seal our fates for good.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - SING OUT

Here too we recite that nostalgic melody as we stand bent, knocking on our chests, praying that God "opens the gates to those who knock in repentance" while singing:

יַעַל כָּלֵם אֱלוֹק סְלִיחוֹת. סָלַח לָנוּ. מָחַל לָנוּ. כִּפֵּר לָנוּ

Why do we sing such a melody while we confess, exposing our mistakes and wrongdoings? Is this self-affliction? Recall that this verb *la'anot* (of "ועניתם") not only means to afflict but it also means to answer. And so the mitzvah *אֶת-נִפְשֵׁיכֶם* means that on this day we answer the call of our souls. Our neshama calls out to us every year and though the mitzvah of Yom Kippur is to fast, the real work is to answer the call of our souls. The language of the soul is a melody and we answer back in song.

A midrash in Yalkut Shimoni teaches that when the Torah uses the verb *ענתה/לענות*, it always means to answer in song - "אין 'ענתה' אלא שירה" - We know this, says the midrash, because of the verse *ותען להן מרים* (Shemot 15:21), when Miriam sang responsively with the women after the splitting of the sea. Therefore, the midrash concludes, any act of "לענות/answering" comes in a song. And so, when we perform *vidui* and confess in song, we answer the call of the neshama saying I can do better this year. I want to do better. I want to draw close.

How powerful that this teaching stems from Miriam, who demonstrated resilience and faith through the suffering in Egypt, and anticipated miracles together with the women of her generation. Her song reassures us that redemption is possible and to celebrate future possibilities in the present.

Likewise for us, when we stand in confession, with anxiety and shame, our song reminds us to hope for redemption, to yearn for a change, and to answer.

Together when we sing we are resilient, we remember, we rise. It is fitting, therefore, that the Torah is referred to as a song. In parshat Vayechi, which we will read just before Rosh Hashanah, Moshe warns Bnei Israel that there will be a time of darkness in which Hashem will hide His face from us and we will experience many evils and troubles. When that happens, however, *וענתה השירה הזאת*, *לפניו לעד*, the song of the Torah will answer us, serve as a witness and, through its song, remind us of our eternal covenant with Hashem.

To conclude, I bring Rav Soloveitchik's moving words to explain why the Torah is called a song: "Singing is an emotional performance. [The experience] fascinates, arouses passion, has the power of awakening hidden desires and aspirations. Music is the most powerful means to arouse people. It shares with the religious experience the tremor and excitement; the longing and the joy one feels confronted with something exalted, beautiful and sublime... The aesthetic musical experience is a total one: the whole of [a person] is immersed in it. The same should be true for Torah."

Singing connects us to our innermost selves, to our roots and to one another. Singing focuses us, unites us and draws us closer to Hashem. This year, let us listen to the music of our souls, may we respond in song, opening our mouths and hearts, bringing ourselves fully to our tefillot.

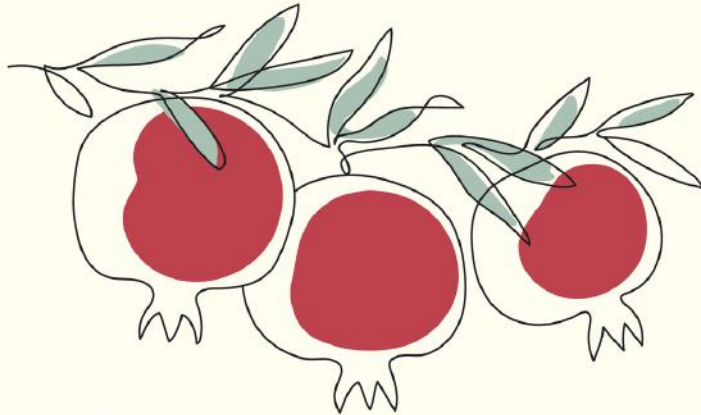
And as we sing out, may *הקדוש ברוך הוא* hear us, heal us, inscribe us in the book of life and answer our tefillot for good so that we may continue to sing the song of our souls with joy, *nachat* and in good health for years to come.



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Shana Tova ה'תשפ"ד

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BY SONYA SCHREIBER

MIND THE GAP

We know by now that teshuva and growth take work, and that living with meaning requires effort and intention. As every year, Elul and Tishrei come around to remind us to be working on ourselves – but what work should we be doing? Where are we meant to be directing our efforts? How can we begin to evaluate ourselves in a way that inspires us to make meaningful and lasting change?

Rav Lichtenstein, in his book *Return and Renewal*, reflects on the broader components of teshuva, stating: “Retrospectively, we realize that we could have structured our lives so much better, suffused it with greater value, organized it more efficiently, utilized time and effort more wisely. We could have set our priorities more correctly. We look back upon life, and even when we don’t see active evil, we see so much waste. And waste itself is evil.” Waste is evil – that’s a powerful statement.

He goes on to quote the gemara in Shabbat (129a, 140b) which teaches that *bal tashchit* (wastefulness) of oneself is even greater than that of physical items. The wasting of our own resources is more severe than the waste or destruction of property. He concludes, “How much worse is the waste of spiritual potential, the gap between what we could have been, what we should have been, and what we are.”

This scary gap between who we could be and who we are is what we are faced with each year at this time. It’s a realization that should shock and sadden us, but should also motivate us. It’s not too late. We have, once again, another opportunity – not to just say the fleeting words of the *vidui*, but to use those statements as a springboard for renewed awareness. Renewed awareness of the larger habits and routines that no longer serve us or lead to our growth. A renewed awareness of all of those opportunities that we keep failing to notice or to utilize. Ultimately, it’s a chance to look more closely at how our worldview and mindset affect the way in which we engage with the world around us – the decisions that we make, the actions that we take – and end up raising us up or, unfortunately, bringing us down.



“Ultimately, the values, priorities & mindsets we subscribe to this year will lead to the actions, habits & routines we’ll fall into.”

A beautiful illustration of this is given by Rav Wolbe who used to describe a woman with whom it was impossible to speak *lashon hara*. The reason was that whenever she heard something negative spoken about someone, her immediate, natural response would be “How can we be of help?” For her, the world was not there to serve her with voyeuristic pleasures, and people’s personal stories were not there to derive enjoyment from; rather, for her, these kinds of details were simply compassionate messages that could lead to acts of *chesed*. The woman couldn’t see the potential for *lashon hara* – she could only see opportunities for positive initiatives.

Ultimately, the values, priorities, and mindsets we subscribe to this year will lead to the actions, habits and routines we’ll fall into. May this year bring us to a deeper sense of awareness and self-reflection, allowing us to open our eyes to the many opportunities that surround us and helping us close that gap between who we are and who we could be.

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Wishing the Shivtei Yisrael
community a happy and
healthy and yes, even a
sweet New Year!



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BY GINA JUNGER

MAKING SPACE

Personal space may be different for each person. You will probably be more comfortable standing close to your friend than a stranger. Covid-19 brought up the issue of social distancing; making us more conscious about the space we kept between others. I remember an episode of "Seinfeld" in which her friends were disturbed by Elaine's new boyfriend (Judge Reinhold) who was a "close talker" because he stood unusually close to others when talking to them.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avot Chapter 5 describes ten miracles which occurred in the Beit HaMikdash. For example- no fly was ever seen in the slaughter house in the Temple, and no person ever died as a result of being bitten by a serpent or scorpion. These miracles occurred in order to make the visit to the Beit HaMikdash pleasant for everyone. Among the ten miracles listed are two that are connected to the issue of personal space. Miracle number 8 is that "They would stand crowded (during the chagim) but had ample space to prostrate themselves- עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים ורווחים," and number 10 "No one ever said there is no space for me to sleep in Jerusalem- ולא אמר אדם לחברו צר לי המקום שאלין בירושלים"

The word צפופים also has the root "tzaf-floating". It expresses that the crowd was so packed that people's feet would be literally lifted from the floor. Yet when it was time to bow and confess one's sins, everyone miraculously had plenty of space. Rashi adds that this enabled them to utter their private prayers and requests to Hashem insuring privacy while confessing their sins.

The Mishna describes that during the Shalosh Regalim, miraculously everyone found a place in Yerushalayim to lodge, and no one ever complained about the overcrowded conditions. Jews who don't complain? That is already a miracle! According to the commentators the city was really not large enough, but no one felt distress (tzar), due to their great love for Hashem, their love for the Beit HaMikdash, as well as the love everyone had towards their fellow man.

I can honestly say that I did not understand the profound message of this Mishna until I made aliyah. In California I knew people with large homes yet they never had "space". In contrast, my Israeli relatives all lived in small apartments and there was always space for me and also a friend.

When there is unity and harmony, many people can fit into a small apartment, and when it is lacking, each person feels that the other is encroaching on his space. Irving Bunim in his commentary on Pirkei Avot points out that the text of the Mishna says that they were crowded when they were standing.

Standing implies stubbornness and defiance. But if you are willing to prostrate yourself – bend – then there will be a place for everyone. May we enjoy our new physical space but always remember that in our Beit Knesset, like in the Beit HaMikdash, it's not about physical space but about making space for everyone.

“May we enjoy our new physical space but always remember that in our Beit Knesset like in the Beit HaMikdash it's not about physical space but about making space for everyone.”

MEET THE COMMITTEE

TASHA ELLISTON, CO-VICE CHAIRMAN



“I will be looking forward to helping the community continue to grow and make sure that everything runs smoothly this year. “

I am Tasha Elliston and I have been living in Raanana since my aliyah, 18 years ago. I have 3 girls - Tamar (18) who is in the army, Shiri (16) who studies at Meitarim and Adi (12) who is at Amit. I am the co-vice chairman of Shivtei, I oversee the children (ages 0-12) and sort out all the logistics.

In my dreams I am looking forward to an easy year and being able to give over all of my responsibilities to the next person. In reality I will be looking forward to helping the community continue to grow and make sure that everything runs smoothly this year. I know of many people who have spoken fondly of how Shivtei's strong sense of community has positively impacted their lives, ours included. The supportive environment and connections forged within Shivtei have become a significant source of comfort and growth for us as a family.

DAN COHEN, CO-VICE CHAIRMAN & COMMUNICATIONS



“We love Shivtei because this community gave us a warm embrace when we made aliyah and never let go.“

I'm Dan Cohen and our family made aliyah in 2017. My wife, Aimee Fisher, and I have three kids - Joanne (19) currently in Tzahal, Abby (15) and Sonny (13). My role on the board is to serve as vice-chair and oversee communications.

In the year ahead, we are looking to find each and every way to share information and engage the community. We want to ensure that everyone is well aware of developments within the shul and find ways to volunteer as well as support our Uniquely Blessed campaign. We are always looking for writers and designers to help with content creation. We love Shivtei because this community gave us a warm embrace when we made aliyah and never let go.

JOSHUA RUDOLPH, TREASURER



“Shivtei is not standing still - it is dynamic & growing & there is so much to be excited about.”

I am Joshua Rudolph, married to Eli (my claim to fame), with 3 kids - Mia (14), Shani (12) and Avi (5). Originally from South Africa, we made aliyah 10 years ago and have been living in Ra'anana ever since. I am the treasurer at Shivtei. My role is general financial oversight of the shul and the gemach.

It is a very exciting time to be part of the Shivtei community. There are massive investments being made in our community- from refurbishments of the interior of the shul, to perhaps greater refurbishments to the entire structure in the near future, new activities and services for members of all ages (and especially the youth), enhanced Torah programming with world class rabbinic leaders and guest lecturers on a regular basis and so much more. Shivtei is not standing still - it is dynamic and growing - and there is so much to be excited about. Shivtei is our second home. We have shared simchas, Baruch Hashem, and unfortunately tragedy as well, with the Shivtei community - and both have made us so grateful to be part of it. There is a community here in the best sense of the word. Our kids have grown up on the campus, in a loving and safe environment where people care for one another and where they are exposed to yiddishkeit and family values. In truth though, if I had to pick one thing that I have been uniquely blessed by... it would be the gin & tonic bar.

ELI RUDOLPH, CHESED



“To be able to help our community in good times & bad times & to make people feel connected & cared for is what it's truly all about.”

Hi, my name is Eli Rudolph. We have been living in Israel and Ra'anana for almost 11 years. I'm married to Josh and we made aliyah with our 2 little girls at the time, Mia and Shani, and had our very own little Sabra here in Israel, Avi. This is my final year on the shul committee serving as the head of Chesed.

It has been a complete privilege and honor to serve the community through this portfolio. To be able to help our community in good times and bad times and to make people feel connected and cared for is what it's truly all about. We have an incredible community who springs into action when help is needed (generally within mere minutes) and to be part of that is truly very special. Shivtei and the Shivtei community is our second home. Both Josh and I volunteer for the committee because we truly feel so passionate about the amazing kehillah. Our children benefit from it through the amazing youth programming and it has drawn them even closer to their Jewish identity. We couldn't imagine our aliyah journey without Shivtei.



“I am excited that people have already stepped up to be more involved in different areas to help the community reach its potential.”

I am Deborah Dickson and we have now been in Raanana since our aliyah, 17 years ago. I am married to Michael and we are blessed with 5 children - Dalia (19) who is serving in the Israeli army, Yoav (17) at Chomesh, Yael (16) at Amit, Dan (13) at Kfar Batya and Ella (11) at Yavne. My role on the board is to support and liaise on behalf of the women's leadership team and the youth team.

I am excited that people have already stepped up to be more involved in different areas to help the community reach its potential. We are so blessed to have such varied talents that can all play a role. I really love the Shivtei Wednesday Beit Midrash and hope to see it grow this year. I am looking forward to running a new session this year at the Beit Midrash, called the Parasha Pages Collective. Like a book club, we will all bring our own insights and research on the parasha to share in a stimulating and intellectual discussion each week! All are welcome to join! Shivtei is home for us and has been since the day we landed. People are kind, generous and look out for one another. The bond between our children in the youth is such a bonus - a whole other friendship circle that is full of values and enhances their Jewish experience that they are blessed to have alongside school and their other activities.



“I am looking forward to a year of multiple educational activities, old & new, on Shabbat & during the week.”

My name is Meir Valman. I'm married to Persha and the father of Adina, Avigayil, and Summer. I am responsible for Education at Shivtei.

I am looking forward to a year of multiple educational activities, old and new, on Shabbat and during the week. We will continue to offer shiurim and learning opportunities including the Beit Midrash programme on Wednesday nights, Semichat Chaver on Monday nights and many others throughout the week. There are also many additional things we can do this year and with the community's support we can make them happen. Please come to me with new ideas and offers to help and we will try to implement them. Shivtei has been our family's home for over 20 years and is our family in Israel. We have celebrated 3 Bat Mitzvahs at the shul and it represents our connection both with the past and with the future. The shul is an integral part of my daily life with three minyanim in the morning and two in the evening.



“I’m enthusiastic about fostering a deeper sense of community engagement.”

I'm Daniel Blog, originally from the Netherlands. After our aliyah, my family and I have spent the past 11 years in Raanana. I'm happily married to Sarah, and together we are blessed with three wonderful children: Shirelle, (Tzava) 20, Raphael (Mechina Kesset) 19, and Yael (Amit) 14. My role revolves around curating and coordinating activities and events at Shivtei.

I'm enthusiastic about fostering a deeper sense of community engagement. It's heartwarming to witness new faces joining us every week, and my aim is to encourage our members to connect and build meaningful relationships. I'm always receptive to fresh ideas, and if you're interested in contributing to event organization, please don't hesitate to get in touch. When my family and I first arrived at Shivtei, we were complete strangers. However, the warmth of the welcome, the genuine kindness, and the generosity of those who opened their homes to us made our aliyah remarkably smooth. Now, we're fortunate to count an incredible group of friends as part of our extended family, all of whom we got to know through the community.

LYN KACEV, CHEVRA



“We came on aliya in 1988 and have been active members of the Shul since then.”

My name is Lyn, and my husband Allan and I are part of the group who founded Shivtei. We came on aliya in 1988 and have been active members of the shul since then. We are so happy to see how the community has grown and blossomed. In my role as the Chevra Liaison, I am responsible for programming for the members of our shul who are over the age of 60. We have a Shabbat meal together four times a year and I enjoy organizing the events and making sure that they all go smoothly. Baruch Hashem we have been blessed with two daughters, eight grandchildren and a great granddaughter.

GASTON GRAUSZ, CO-GABBI



השם שלי גסטון גראוס ואני נשואי לריצ'ל ליבור. יש לנו שלושה ילדים, עומר (כיתה י' בעמית), דניאל (כיתה ה' בבילו) ואלון (טרום חובה בגן פטל). אני הגבאי של הבית כנסת. המטרה שלי בעיקר היא לדאוג לתפילות של הקהילה ולכן אני מנסה לדאוג שכל המנינים מתקיימים ופועלים לפי ההלכה והמנהגים של הבית כנסת. לשם כך יש עוד גבאים רבים אשר כל אחד אחראי על מניין מסוים. שבטי היא הקהילה שההורים שלנו הקימו והגיעו אליה כשעלו לארץ. שבטי היא הקהילה בה התחתנו והקמנו את המשפחה שלנו. שבטי הוא המרכז הרוחני שלנו, "מקדש מעט". שבטי היא הקהילה בו אנו חולקים עם החברים שמחות.



“Shivtei is a great investment in my family’s Jewish Experience.”

My name is Marcy Klahr. I came to Israel on a gap-year program over 25 years ago and never left. I am married to Jonny and we have three children: Gilad (17), Ezra (15) and Ellie (12). We are pretty multi-national. I am South African, Jonny is English, Gilad was born in Israel and Ezzy and Ellie were born in America. But our home is undoubtedly Raanana and our spiritual home is the beautiful Shivtei community.

My role at Shivtei involves creating a cohesive plan for shul fundraising and following up with donors. Belonging and being active in a shul is central to my family’s Jewish identity. We frequently use the shul - Shabbatot, Chagim, Bnei Mitzvah, dinners, and speakers. So, giving towards Shivtei seems like a great investment in my family’s Jewish experience.

When not volunteering, I teach exercise to seniors in cities around Israel. I am passionate about helping seniors maintain and improve their quality of life.



“We strongly believe in communal participation and look forward to getting more people involved in our wonderful Shivtei Yisrael.”

My name is Barry Cohen. I’m married to Shely Cohen. My role is to help run the operations of the shul. We are a vibrant community and there is so much going on.

I am looking forward to being more involved in the overall shaping of the future of the Shul. Our family has been involved from the beginning and we are in awe of the activities that go on constantly in our shul and community. We strongly believe in communal participation and look forward to getting more people involved in our wonderful Shivtei Yisrael.

Shivtei has been an integral part of our lives since we made aliya. We have celebrated Bar and Bat Mitzvas, Weddings, and more. One of the highlights would be naming our grandchildren in the shul, which is dedicated to their great-grandparents, Chaim and Chaja Mowszowski. That makes us uniquely blessed.

BY BEN GROSS

SHIVTEI LEADERSHIP COURSE

“This is a fundamental motivation and catalyst of Jewish leadership - to partner with God in improving our world”

This past year, Rabbi Bendavid led a series of talks and shiurim discussing the nature of leadership and what it means to be a Jewish leader. The group was led on a journey through Tanach, where we dissected the motivations, intentions, successes, and failures. Not only were we treated to a series of high-quality shiurim but we also had opportunities to discuss the material, challenge assumptions, question, and listen to our peers. Topics included the ethics of responsibility, adaptive leadership, abuse of power, leadership with authority, confidence, humility, and more.

Additionally, we had the opportunity to prepare and present 15-minute talks on leaders of our choice, either at the end of a learning session or as TED styled talk on Shabbat. Members of the group presented masterful presentations on Golda Meir, Rabbis Ovadia Yosef, Jakobovitz, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the Herzog family etc. In addition, we were introduced to phenomenal guest speakers, including Dr Daniel Polisar on David Ben-Gurion, Dr Tanya White on female leadership, and Dr Yehuda Mirsky on Rav Kook.

In one of the earlier classes, we learned a Midrash that compares Avraham's command to go forth with a person passing a palace in flames. Avraham argues that the palace must have an owner, and so too the owner of the Earth is God.



Rabbi Sacks makes the point that in order for Avraham to comprehend this dissonance of a palace, representing order, and it being in flames, which relates to the disorder brought about by man, Avraham recognises his role as a partner with God to protest against evil and fight it.

“Judaism begins not in wonder that the world is, but in protest that the world is not as it ought to be. It is in that cry, that sacred discontent, that Abraham's journey begins.” - Radical Then, Radical Now p 55.

Avraham learns to argue against the status quo and against God: “Will the Judge of the world not perform justice?”

This is a fundamental motivation and catalyst of Jewish leadership - to partner with God in improving our world, to become free to be co creators in ethical change, and seeing the godliness in our fellow humans.

I'm grateful to have taken part in the first leadership cohort and I, together with all of the other members, am looking forward to implementing the lessons we have learned.

הנה מה טוב ומה נעים שבת אחים גם יחד

Shivtei is so much more than just a shul. It is a vibrant, supportive community and a hub of chesed, zionism, and spiritual growth.

We are #uniquelyblessed



A Community Like No Other

- **350** member families & full-time Rabbinic staff and pastoral care.
- A **multi-generational community** with members from diverse religious backgrounds.
- A **deep love for medinat Yisrael** & commitment to meaningfully contribute to Israeli society.



Rabbinic Leadership

We provide care at every life-cycle moment. The Bendavids and the entire Shivtei team are there for you.



The Best Children & Youth Shul Experience in Israel

Activities for every age group. Booming teen program. Innovative Bnei Mitzvah learning. Expanded youth staff. Shabbat AM programming for children birth to 18.



Programming & Minyanim

7 Shabbat minyanim, Jewish calendar events, daily learning, Semichat Chaver, weekly beit midrash & women's programming. Shivtei aims to meet the needs of the entire community.

DONATE TODAY TO THE #UNIQUELYBLESSED CAMPAIGN!

We Need Your Support!

Please invest in Shivtei's growth & support our activities with a 3-year commitment. Because we are #uniquelyblessed.



→ We Are Growing

- **50 new member families** since January 2022.
- **25% increase in youth membership.**
- **New programs** including the Leadership Cohort, Shivtei Youth 56 & Smichat Chaver.

→ The Reality

Shivtei maintains tight fiscal controls and modest spending. Every Shekel is maximized.

Membership dues do not cover Shivtei's building and administration expenses. Increased inflation has further strained the budget.

Our Goal

We need your support please. Shivtei seeks to raise 300K per year for the next 3 years.

Your help will ensure that our beautiful community continues to flourish and enrich our lives. Please scan the QR below to give. All amounts are welcome and greatly appreciated.



#UNIQUELYBLESSED

SPEAK WITH MARCY KLAHR OR DAN COHEN TO MAKE YOUR COMMITMENT

BY TOMER & RAZ LOCKER

THEY SAY IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD

They say it takes a village to raise a child, but what about a village of children... of youth?

Rabbi Meir said: When the Jews stood before Sinai to receive the Torah, G-d said to them: "I swear, I will not give you the Torah unless you provide worthy guarantors who will assure that you will observe its laws." The Jews responded, "Master of the world, our forefathers will be our guarantors!" G-d replied, "Your guarantors themselves require guarantors!" "Master of the world," the Jews exclaimed, "Our prophets will guarantee our observance of the Torah." G-d then replied, "I have grievances against them, too. The shepherds have rebelled against Me." G-d then once again requested proper guarantors. As a last resort, the Jews declared, "Our children will serve as our guarantors!"

"They truly are worthy guarantors," G-d replied. "Because of them I will give the Torah."

Over the past year, we've had the privilege of being a part of Shivtei Youth. This journey has allowed us to connect with exceptional young individuals, each with aspirations and a drive to grow. We are continually amazed by their values - sharing, taking initiative, embracing responsibility, and supporting one another. Throughout this past year, we repeatedly encountered situations that revealed the true essence of our youth. They showed us bonds that transcend age groups, genuine eagerness to welcome newcomers, and a powerful sense of achdut that is unique to our community.

We've experienced so much together this year! From the countless powerful Shabbat tefilot, meals in our apartment, weekly Beit Midrash and inspiring tisches, to great kiddushim and shiurim. We have had great trips and events - the Selichot tour, the Yud Aleph and Yud Bet Tzfat Shabbaton,



“They showed us bonds that transcend age groups, genuine eagerness to welcome newcomers & a powerful sense of Achdut that is unique to our community.”

an awesome Purim event, Zikaron Basalon in the Shivtei hall and agricultural volunteering with HaShomer Hachadash. We went camping on Lag B'omer, stayed awake on Tikkun Leil with shiurim from members of the community, and went away for Shivtei's biggest and best Youth Shabbaton to date with over 160 of our special youth.

It has been an incredible journey getting to know the youth, and we are excitedly waiting for the coming year, knowing that it will be an even better one. We thank all those who continue to help make Shivtei Youth the special place that it is - Rabbi Bendavid and Rabbanit Etta, Rav Dani and Sonya, Andy Album, Jeremy Kaye, Josie Lutrin, Deborah Dickson, Saul Adler, the committee and office staff - your support and guidance is so treasured and appreciated. We also welcome Rav Doron and Gila Chitiz and look forward to a powerful and motivating year ahead. We believe that Shivtei Youth will continue to grow and flourish, and become the proud guarantors of the future of the Jewish people.

YOUTH TESTIMONIALS

SIVAN GRAY, 8TH GRADE



“One of my favorite things about Shivtei is that every week at the Beit Midrash program we learn Torah and the Parasha.”

For me it's really special to go to a shul where we also meet up not just on Shabbat. I feel like I belong to something and love the fact that every week I have something to say at the Shabbat table. It makes me feel closer to my friends and my shul.

ABI JASON, 12TH GRADE



“My experience at Shivtei has been the highlight of my week, consistently each week, for as long as I can remember.”

From the tight - knit social meetups and the amazing circle of friends I have made along the way - who today are like family - to the uplifting and inspirational spiritual and educational leaders, such as Rabbi Bendavid and Rabbanit Etta, Raz and Tomer and others. They help shape our positive thinking and Torah-driven values which help, and will undoubtedly continue to, serve as a stable compass in life. I am so grateful for this positive and life-shaping experience, and specifically to the Shivtei community and leadership for all they have done and continue to do for us.

DANIEL ERLICH, 12TH GRADE



“An event that really stuck out for me was the נ' and ב' Shabbaton in Tzfat.”

The Shabbaton was a very meaningful and interesting experience. We got to meet the “Picture Rabbi”, as some like to call him, and in my eyes that is a once in a lifetime experience. We also got to enter the dark cave where we sang nigunim. Altogether I had an amazing time and I believe that everyone did too.



34 Adventures
15 Countries
4 Continents

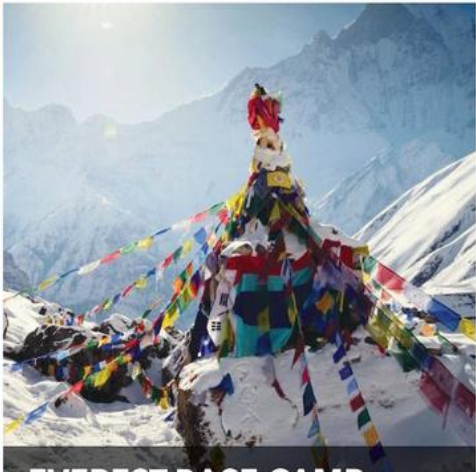
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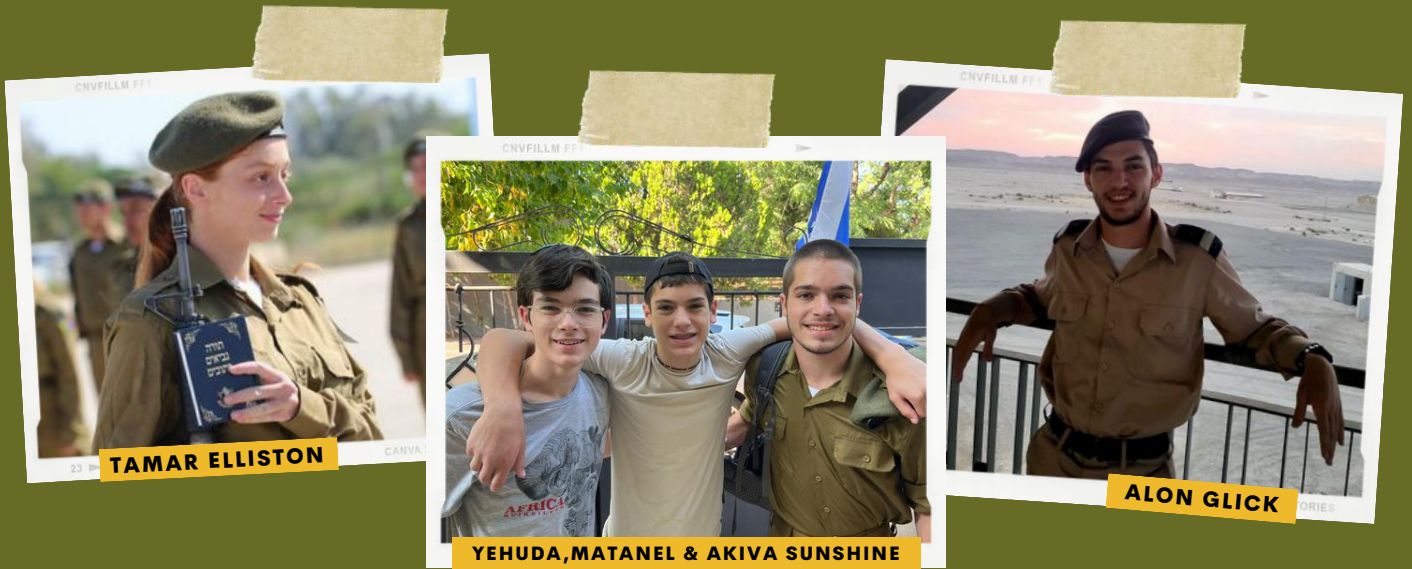


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BAR/BAT MITZVAH PREP





Starting Wednesday September 6th 2023!

****Bar & Bat Mitzvah group start times will be notified in WhatsApp groups**



**Fun, Food, Friends...
...and Torah!**

SHIVTEI YOUTH BEIT MIDRASH

**5784
תשפ"ד**

WEDNESDAYS 20:15-21:30



ו'

**RABBANIT
ETTA BENDAUID**

***Kitta Vav - Bat Mitzvah Program*



ד'

**RABBI
EITAN BENDAUID**

***Kitta Zayin Boys*



ד', ח'

JEREMY KAYE
Kitta Zayin & Chet Girls



ח'

RAV MIKEY SUNSHINE
Kitta Chet Boys



ט', י'

RAV DORON CHITITZ
Kitta Tet & Yud Girls



ט'

TOMER LOCKER
Kitta Tet Boys



י'

HERSH GRESZES
Kitta Yud Boys



י"א, י"ב

RAV DANI SCHREIBER
Kitta Yud Aleph & Yud Bet Boys



י"א

ISABEL FACHLER
Kitta Yud Aleph Girls



י"ב

RAZ LOCKER
Kitta Yud Bet Girls

**"TORAH TURBO:
5- MINUTE POWER TALK!"**

**מעריב
PIZZA**



ENJOY PIZZA WITH YOUR FRIENDS AFTER MAARIV

BY ORIYA RONEN

KNOWING WHERE WE COME FROM

PARSHAT KI TAVO

Parshat Ki Tavo is also called the parsha of הכרת הטוב and we learn in this parsha about מצות מקרא ביכורים. Moshe taught us that once we enter ארץ ישראל and start planting our fields, we must bring our first fruits to the בית המקדש, give them to the כהן גדול and say thank you to Hashem for this fruit and for this land that Hashem gave to us.

But in addition to saying thank you to Hashem, we are commanded to tell our story, starting from Avraham and Sarah, our first parents: From the words Arami Oveid Avi, we tell our entire story: My father went down to Mitzrayim and our family grew to be so large. But we suffered in slavery and we called out to Hashem who heard us and took us out and brought us to this land. And now, here are my first fruits from this land that Hashem gave me.

Why do we tell this story instead of just saying thank you? Wouldn't thank you be enough? Thank you is not enough. Because telling our story from the beginning, as far back as we can go, makes us appreciate what we have even more!

When I say that we left Mitzrayim, it makes me feel like I really did leave. It helps me to connect to my שורשים. It is very easy to forget where we came from. I used to see my story as beginning from when I was born. But now I realize we must start our own stories from as far back as we can go. Because knowing where we come from helps us know our way forward and helps us to appreciate what we have.

And so, inspired by Mikra Bikurim, as I become a bat mitzvah, I want to share my story starting from the journey that my grandparents took to arrive here in Israel. My grandfather on my father's side, Natan Eitan, was born in Poland and, ברוך השם, arrived in Argentina in 1937 at the age of 8 with his mom, my great grandmother Tova. They were the only two survivors from a huge family killed by the Nazis. My grandfather loved singing and was part of the shul choir. He became a very successful businessman.



My grandmother, Savta Sharon, was born in Argentina and her parents also came from Poland. Her father, my great grandfather Zvi Hersh, was the main gabbi of the Great Synagogue in Argentina.

From my mom's side, my grandfather Eze was born in India to a family from Iraq. He moved to England in 1958 and became a lawyer and was involved in the Shul and community. My great grandparents, Avraham and Sibil, taught him to love eretz Israel. My Savta Gillian was born in England to a family originally from Poland. Her grandfather Raphael was a well known businessman who supported Jewish shop-owners to help them to keep their shops closed on Shabbat.

My grandparents all decided to make aliyah and if it wasn't for them, I would not be who I am today and may not even be where I am today. They took those big steps for us and our family and I am so grateful to them, and so grateful that Hashem helped them on their journeys. And as I celebrate becoming a bat mitzvah, I'm really blessed to be doing that here in Eretz Yisrael, together with my family and friends. I see how telling my story makes me appreciate where I am even more! I have so much HaKarat HaTov. And with Hakarat HaTov comes lots of joy. Going back to my parsha, once we say thank you to Hashem for all that we've been given, the Torah commands us to celebrate: וְשִׂמְחָתְךָ בְּכָל-הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן-לְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתְךָ אֲתֶה וְהִלֵּיתָ וְהִגַּדְתָּ אֶשֶׁר בָּקִרְבְּךָ:

We are supposed to be happy - together with our families and appreciate all that Hashem gives us! The Torah teaches us that simcha comes from hakarat hatov. And this is a very important lesson. I hope to continue to thank Hashem for my own family's journey, for my family's health and happiness and for all that I have every day. After all, איזהו עשיר? השמח בחלקו... So with that, I thank all my family and friends. May Hashem bless us all with a happy and healthy year ahead. Shana Tova uMetukah!

WHY DO WE BLOW THE SHOFAR IN ELUL?

The first reason we blow the shofar in Elul comes from a Midrash in Pirkei Rebbe Eliezer that takes us back to the very first Rosh Chodesh Elul that we had as a Jewish people. We had just left Mitzrayim and experienced the drama at Har Sinai. But we also then made the terrible mistake of making the Egel Ha-Zahav. Then, on Rosh Chodesh Elul, Hashem called Moshe to get the second luchot. According to the Midrash, Hashem said to Moshe, "Come up the mountain to Me and sound a shofar through the camp." And as Moshe went up the mountain to receive the second luchot, the shofar was sounded as an alarm and a warning to the people not to repeat the חטא העגל.

And so, the shofar served two purposes on that first Rosh Chodesh Elul: one, to notify the people that Moshe was going up to get the Torah and two, telling them to continue their teshuva process and warning them not to repeat their חטא!

These reasons are still relevant today! We blow the shofar to wake us up and to do teshuva at this time of year. We've all made mistakes this past year. This sound reminds us not to repeat them and instead to be better people. Also we are blowing the shofar during Elul to imagine that we are receiving the Torah again, to be as committed as ever to our learning and observance of mitzvot. This is so appropriate for me as I become a bat mitzvah: I know when I hear the shofar I will be thinking about how I am receiving the Torah today, to hold on to forever.

There are two other aspects of the shofar that I want to share with you: the sound and the actual object. In the tenth chapter of Sefer Bamidbar, I studied how the sounds of the חצוצרות blown in the desert had different meanings. The Tekiah was blown to tell everyone to gather by the Ohel Moed. And it was blown during happy times - like Rosh Chodesh and Chagim. When people heard the Tekiah, they knew to gather and to celebrate by thanking and praising Hashem.



The Teruah was also used for two reasons: Either it meant to tell the entire camp to pack up and move, as they traveled through the desert, or it meant to prepare for war. I bet that when Am Israel heard the sounds of the Teruah, they were scared. Uncertain of what would happen. They would have to move to a new place or go to war.

I know if I were living in the time of Torah, I would be much happier to hear the sound of the Tekiah. But even today, these different sounds teach us how to feel during Elul. The Teikah tells us today to gather together as Jewish people at this time of year and thank Hashem and praise Hashem during these chagim. This is a time of great joy and celebration. But the ימים נוראים are also a time when we are supposed to be a little afraid. The Teruah reminds us that we are moving to a new year and are uncertain of what will be. The Teruah reminds us to ask Hashem for help in these times of not knowing. One thing I know I am praying for is for everyone here and everyone I love to live long, healthy lives.

The actual shofar itself reminds us of Akedat Yitzhak. Hashem told Avraham to sacrifice his beloved son, and Avraham was about to do just that, listening to Hashem's command. But suddenly an angel came and told Avraham to stop because now Hashem knows Avraham loves and fears Hashem. Hashem confirms the brit here: Hashem will always protect Avraham and Avraham's children. At that point, Avraham looks around him and sees a ram and sacrifices that instead of Yitzhak.

And so, when we blow this ram's horn, we are recalling the Akeidah and we are asking Hashem to remember Avraham's sacrifice. We should have Ahavat VeYirat Shamayim, like Avraham and we ask Hashem to keep the brit to be compassionate toward Avraham's children, that is, all of us.

Shana Tova!

YOU CANNOT IGNORE SOMEONE WHO NEEDS HELP

DVAR TORAH FOR PARSHAT KI TEITZE



Chodesh Elul is a time of teshuva, on working on ourselves to become better. It is a time to reflect on our relationships with Hashem and others, and to try to make these relationships even stronger. tshuva is something that we should be doing all the time but it is in Elul when this is most important to do, because it is just before Rosh Hashanah. Toward the end of my parsha, Hashem tells us:

לֹא תִטֶּה מִשִּׁפְּטֵי גֵר יְתוֹם וְלֹא תִחַבֵּל בְּגֵד אֶלְמָנָה:

Literally this means do not take away the rights of the ger (the convert), the yetom (an orphan) or the almana (the widow). We have a mitzvah to help those who may be forgotten; who may need support making a living or defending themselves. Hashem immediately follows this mitzvah by saying:

זָכַרְתָּ כִּי עַבְדִּי בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיִּפְדֶּךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִיִּשְׁמֵ - עַל כֵּן אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה.

Hashem reminds us: we were once slaves in Egypt and we called out to Hashem and Hashem took us out. Therefore we must do this mitzvah and take care of others in need. According to the Talmud, this mitzvah to help the stranger or orphan or widow or ani (the poor person) appears in the Torah 36 times. Some even say 46 times. Clearly, this is a really important mitzvah in our tradition.

This mitzvah is about having empathy. It is about recognizing that we have also been in a difficult place and can share similar feelings. I know what it feels like to be left out – who doesn't? – and Hashem is saying: remember that feeling because others feel that too and we can turn that feeling into a mitzvah – we can help each other so no one feels left out. I think this mitzvah should not only apply to those who are poor, the orphan, the convert and widow... rather, we need to learn to support anyone in our community in need. By doing so, we are fulfilling our mitzvot bein adam lechavero and adam l'makom because Hashem wants us to look out for each other. This is an aspect of teshuva. Hashem also commands us in this parsha to leave part of our land and our crops

for those who need food. These mitzvot are called leket, shichecha and peah. Leket is leaving the parts of the field that fall; peah is leaving the corners for those in need and shichecha is leaving what we forgot to take for someone in need. These laws still apply to us today but we don't have fields. So how may we help? We donate our time, our money, and our resources to those who need. I know that when I am able to help others, I feel closer to Hashem and to the people I am helping. And I've always understood that these are acts of chesed. But here, while learning, I can see the source of the mitzvot.

In fact, at the beginning of my parsha, we see the source of the mitzvah to return a lost object, מצות מציאת אבידה...It says that if you see or find something that someone lost, whether it is money, an animal or clothing, you are commanded to return it and you cannot ignore it. The Torah writes: לֹא תוֹכֵל לְהִתְעַלֵּם. Rashi explains that this means you cannot cover your eyes and pretend you don't see it. This is the theme of my parsha: we must pay attention to those who are in need and do what we can to help them. We may not and cannot ignore someone suffering. This is also the big task of teshuva: to pay deeper attention to our midot and our relationships. To reflect on this past year and see that as part of Am Israel, I can contribute to improving the lives of others who may need help. And as I continue to work on the mitzvot bein adam l'chavero, I hope to improve my mitzvot bein adam l'makom – to connect more with what Hashem asks of me.

Now, as I become a bat mitzvah, the responsibilities and the rewards fall on me. Up until now, any rewards for the mitzvot I have done have gone to my parents. Now, it will be up to me – and not just my parents – to do mitzvot like keeping Shabbat, making brachot and, as my parsha says, caring for those who are in need. I hope the lessons we studied now together from Ki Teitzei can help us do teshuva and prepare for the Yamim Noraim. Shana Tova!

BY SHANI RUDOLPH

STANDING WITH EMUNAH & PURPOSE

A DVAR TORAH FOR PARSHAT NITZAVIM-VAYELECH

The parshiot we read this morning, Nitzavim and Vayelech, are so appropriate as I become a bat mitzvah and for all of us at this time before Rosh Hashanah. The three themes that really stand out for me that I want to talk about with you are: brit (covenant), teshuva and the term nitzav. I want to share how they are all connected and how they taught me so much. Throughout Sefer Devarim, Moshe reviews the entire Torah. And now, at the end of his life, Moshe speaks to the people who will enter into Eretz Israel: the children and grandchildren of those who left Mitzrayim. He says: אתם ניצבים - you are all standing here in order to renew the brit, the covenant, between the people and Hashem. Moshe includes not just those standing there in that moment...

וְלֹא אִתְּכֶם לְבַדְכֶם אֲנִי כֹרֵת אֶת הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְאֶת הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֹּאת. כִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁנוּ פֹה עִמָּנוּ עִמָּד הַיּוֹם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ, וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר אֵינָנוּ פֹה עִמָּנוּ הַיּוֹם.

I make this covenant not only with those here today but also with those who are not with us this day. The Midrash teaches us this means that the brit is being made with future generations at this moment. That's us. We are also nitzavim - we are also standing to establish the brit.

What is the brit? Through becoming a bat mitzvah, I've learned a lot about this. The brit is a commitment that was made originally between Hashem and Avraham in Parshat Lech Lecha. Hashem promised Avraham and Sarah that their descendents would become a great nation; that Hashem would bring us to this Holy Land, and Hashem would always be with us throughout the hard times and easier ones. In return, Avraham and Sarah's descendents would have to also keep the brit by trusting Hashem and following Hashem's commandments. This brit continues through Am Israel's journeys and struggles through and out of Mitzrayim. It is renewed again at Har Sinai when they get the Torah, and continues to be with them through their travels and mistakes in the midbar.



Now, once again, here, this brit is re-established just before Moshe passes away and before the people cross over to Eretz Israel.

I realize I may have taken this brit for granted until now. But as I've been learning for my bat mitzvah, I see how important it is to renew the brit every day. To do mitzvot and keep the Torah and trust that Hashem is keeping the brit as well by being with us.

Later in my parsha Moshe says: This mitzvah is not far from you. It is not in the heavens. It is actually very, very close to us.

כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם לֹא נִפְלֶאת הִיא מִמָּוֶה וְלֹא רְחֹקָה הִיא. לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הִיא... כִּי קְרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדְּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבְלִבְבְּךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ.

What is this mitzvah that we're talking about here? It seems that this mitzvah is keeping the brit, meaning, following all the commandments of the Torah! And Rashi says this! The mitzvah that is so close to us is keeping both תורה שבעל פה - both the written and oral Torah.

But the Ramban and the Seforno (two medieval parshanim) explain that this mitzvah that is so close to us is referring to the mitzvah of teshuva. No matter how far we fall, we can always turn back - return - to Hashem, to recognize what we've done, express it, regret it, ask for forgiveness and try not to make these mistakes again and then... start over. This is what teshuva is. It is amazing that we have the chance to renew our connection with Hashem. And it is amazing that this mitzvah of teshuva is discussed right here, right now, as we are in the teshuva process through Elul. This is why we blow the shofar every day this month - to remind us how close this mitzvah is to us! Teshuva returns us to Hashem, and teshuva therefore returns us to the brit. We have the opportunity to renew the brit when we do teshuva.

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - EMUNAH & PURPOSE

Back to the beginning of my Parsha, Moshe begins by calling the entire nation: nitavim. He describes us all as standing to receive and renew the brit and the mitzvah of teshuva. But I learned that nitzav is not the same word as omeid. It does not just mean to stand. Rather, nitzav means to stand with emunah and purpose. That is what we must do to renew the brit. We must stand tall with purpose and emunah whenever we do a mitzvah, or are in the process of teshuva.

Or, if we are going through a challenging time, we are reminded to stand firmly with trust and feel Hashem with us as we choose to follow Hashem and the Torah.

As I think about all those who have supported me until now, I know I am blessed to come from a family where people demonstrate nitzavim all the time in the emunah they show through difficulties and celebrations. May we all have good health! Shana Tova!

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In Memory of Chaim & Chaja Mawazowski

Breaking News!

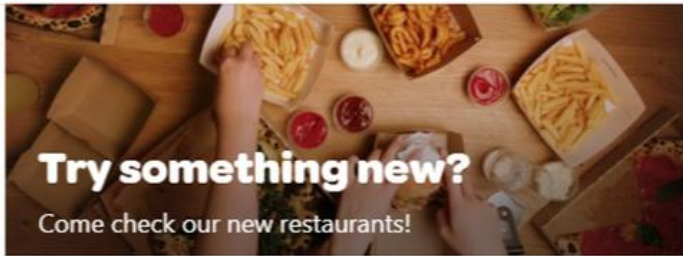
Rav Doron Chitiz
Shivtei Youth
Education Director

We are so excited to announce that Shivtei has appointed **Rav Doron Chitiz** as its first ever Youth Education Director. Doron will be leading our new Beit Midrash programme, will be with the youth every other Shabbat, and will take a huge part in encouraging, motivating and inspiring our youth.

Doron is married to Gila and they have three children: Amichai (8), Yedidya (6) and Hallel (2). They live in Modiin. Doron grew up in Shivtei and was our very first youth worker!

Shivtei Youth gets stronger each year and we have grown our staff to support the amazing activities we want to do. Doron is joining Tomer and Raz to take our youth forward.

Be in touch with us if you have any questions.



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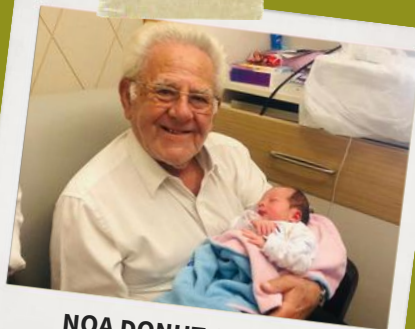
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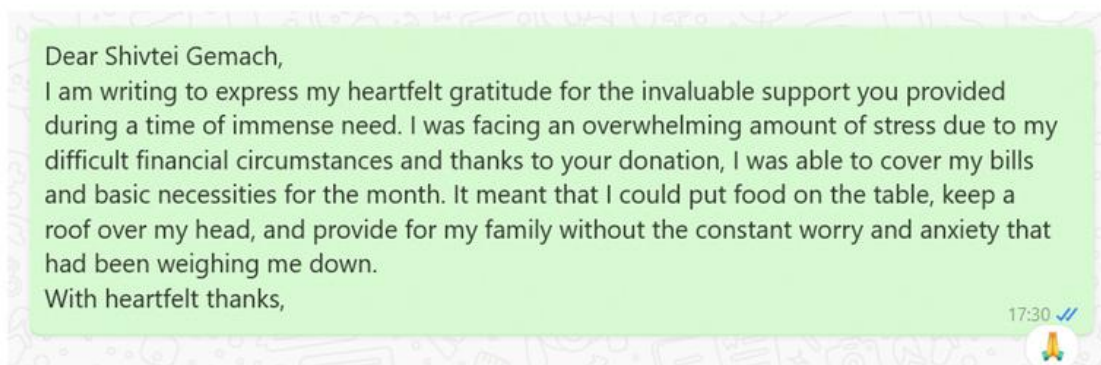


A message from the Gemach:

The Raanana Gemach by Shivtei is YOUR local charity. Ra'anana has many people in need and the Gemach is there to support them. The Gemach is made up of a group of volunteers (separate from the shul management) and supported by the shul office so every shekel donated goes to individuals in need.

From last year's donations, we were able to provide monthly food cards to over 50 families, give loans, pay off bills and purchase school books. We work closely with the city's social services (revacha), other shuls and local charities. Families rely on us every month for support. This coming year we want to do much more - build deeper partnerships with other organizations to provide further support as well as work with the schools to proactively reach out to people in need, to save them the dignity of having to call us.

Below is an example of the type of response we receive.



We need YOUR support. YOUR donation is a gift of hope and confidence. As we start the New Year, please dig deep and donate to help give a fresh start to someone in need.

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Via web: www.shivtei.com/general-donation-to-gemach | Phone: 09-7741842 |
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If you know of someone in need or if you have any questions, contact Chanie 052-4753315.

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*The gemach is an approved charity under Section 46 of the Income Tax ordinance

VISITING SCHOLARS



BY MEIR VALMAN

Inviting guest educators to come to Shivtei as scholars in residence has been a community feature for many years. These teachers provide their unique angle to Torah, which widens and enriches the learning within the shul throughout the year.

Over the past year, we have welcomed several notable scholars in residence. After an initial appearance over the summer, we welcomed back Rabbi Raphael Zarum, dean of the London School of Jewish Studies. Rabbi Zarum presented some of his research on ancient Egypt to help understand the ten plagues and host an oneg with the newly formed 18-25 cohort.

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin, author of the Unlocking the Text series, also visited during the winter. He shared some of his insights on the parsha and his experiences of being a communal leader for over 40 years.

Rabbi Aaron Adler was at Shivtei on the Shabbat preceding Yom Yerushalayim. He gave one shiur based on his research on the Rambam and the philosophy behind the Mishne Torah. He also shared his experiences of being a chauffeur to Rav Soloveitchik for many years and the many things he learned from him.

Rabbi Judah Dardik was formerly a communal Rabbi in California before making aliya. He teaches at Isralight in Jerusalem. He shared unique shiurim on recognizing the different spiritual archetypes that each of the Avot represents, as well as principles for spiritual investing.

Rabbi Ari Kahn came for Shabbat Chazon before Tisha Be'av. The theme of the nine days was apparent in his shiurim, including an understanding of Parshat Devarim involving a reinterpretation of the story of the spies as well as a shiur on one of the stories about the Destruction that is mentioned in the Gemara.

Finally, we were privileged to end the year by hosting the Chief Rabbi of the UK and Commonwealth, Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis, for the first time, who shared some critical Torah insights with us.

We plan to invite several additional scholars during 5784, including many who have never visited our community. We'd like to hear suggestions from the community for other names to consider.

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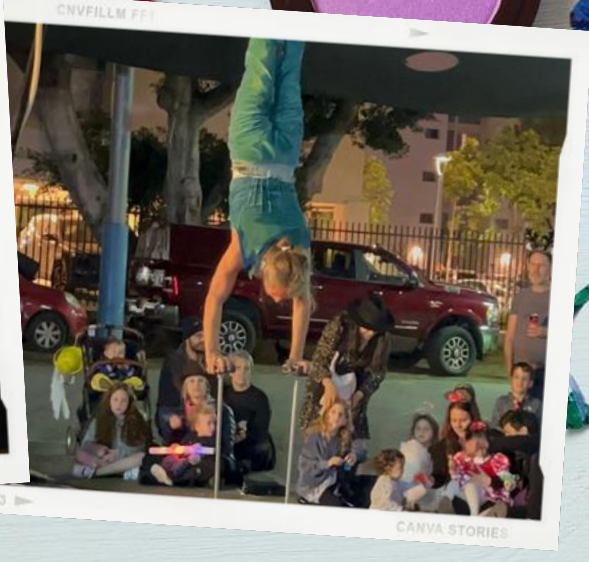


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YOM HA'ATZMAUT



KOTEL TRIPS





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Shivtei Sundays 2023-4

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Dec 17 - 20	Jordan – 4 day	Jerash, Madaba, Nachal Yabok, Machaerus, Nachal Arnon, Petra, Tzoar etc. For details: https://www.fenstertour.com/shivtei-tour-to-jordan
Jan. 14	Caesarea Maritima	Herod's other capital city
Feb. 18	Mandate Jerusalem	Talbiya and Rechavia – Every home in these neighborhoods tell stories of the period just before the State of Israel. City Walking.
Mar. 17	Rishon Letzion and Mikve Yisrael	Rewind to the late 19 th century and learn about the first aliyot by Shomrei Shabbat that insisted on tilling the land with their own hands.

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WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES




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POLAND TRIPS



BY RASHI ROSENZWEIG

IF THESE FORESTS COULD TALK

As someone whose two major obsessions are genealogy and the Holocaust, my recent 3-day trip to Poland was a huge check off my bucket-list. This was by no means a vacation. It was a trip jammed-packed with three 18-hour days of touring what was the home address of my ancestry for roughly 800 years.

Tzvi Sperber, a world-renowned historian and Holocaust educator, assisted by our esteemed Rabbi Eitan BenDavid, led our 34 strong group which mostly consisted of people from our congregation, Kehillat Shivtei Yisrael, plus a few who arrived from London, guided us through what was a deeply moving experience. On a side note, if anybody is seriously considering a journey to Poland to learn about our ancestry as well as see up close what we've seen in movies and in books pertaining to the Shoah, I strongly recommend Tzvi Sperber and his team at JRoots.org.

Arriving at Warsaw in the morning, we all davened Shahrarit together, introduced ourselves, got our much-needed coffees, and then got onto the coach that took us to the heart of Warsaw. Warsaw in February – damn that's cold! I'm a native New Yorker and I have driven through blizzards in white-out conditions, I've skied the slopes in upstate New York and parts of New Jersey. I've survived snowball fights that I myself have instigated, I've trekked to school in snow that reached up to my waist, and never have I ever felt a bitter biting to the bone cold like the cold in Poland. It was a grey, overcast day. As one who grew up during the Cold War years, it looked exactly how I was taught Poland always looked like – miserable, cold and a place I would never want to visit.

Our first stop was the Jewish cemetery right in the middle of Warsaw. Not only is it a cemetery that is several hundred years old, yet during the Nazi occupation, it was the border between the Warsaw Ghetto and the Aryan side.



“It was a trip jammed-packed with three 18-hr days of touring what was the home address of my ancestry for ~ 800 years.”

Since my dear wife's grandmother, Millie Peskowitz Z"L (nee: Manya Pindig) was born in Warsaw to a well-established, industrial family who have had roots in Warsaw for many generations, I was in the cemetery where her ancestors were laid to rest. It was also the final resting place of many esteemed Rabbis, like HaRav Soloveitchik (the Rav's (from YU) paternal grandfather), and many other illustrious Rabbis as well.

Yet, what slapped me across the face, was the last grave we visited. It wasn't any ordinary grave either, as thousands of bodies of people of all ages were interred there. It is covered with large, white stones. This is a mass grave that was used from 1940 until 1943, when the Warsaw Ghetto was in operation. Sperber said that kids (from age 10 and up) were forced to bury the dead there. Throughout my life, I have seen gory pictures of emaciated bodies being dumped into this grave and I was standing right in front of it. My solar plexus nearly caved in as I then realized that this mass grave more than likely bears the remains of my cousin, Bronka Feigenbaum Z"L, who perished

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CONTINUED - FORESTS CAN TALK

in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942, as well as the remains of my wife's great grandfather, Morcechai Pindig (aka "The Gever") who died begging for bread on the streets of the Warsaw Ghetto of starvation. Mind you, prior to 1 September 1939, he was one of the most successful and wealthiest businessmen in all of Warsaw.

Walking about downtown Warsaw was odd. Despite the weather, I did see the beauty in the architecture, and the people seemed OK enough, and I'm stating that with a grain of salt. The locals have seen groups like ours touring their cities for years. They know who we are and why we're there. Most of the time, people just look the other way, but every now and again, you see some people looking our way and either scoffing, giggling or outright laughing.

For the local Poles in Warsaw, reminders of the Holocaust are almost everywhere. Remnants of the Ghetto walls still stand with rusted metal prongs protruding from the tops of these walls that supported barbed wire are found throughout the city. These walls are now in front of high rise apartment buildings, lovely restaurants, shops and cafes. A public high school that was once an exclusively Jewish school still sports signs stating this fact. Just across the street is a large, state-of-the-art sign in memorial to Janus Korczak, his orphanage and the children he looked after. Nothing there is clandestine. It's in their faces.

Remnants of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising are apparent as well. Archeologists have secured where they strongly believe is Mila 18, the bunker where the officers of the uprising were stationed.

I was never really prepared for the next stop. It must have been a 2 to 3 hour bus ride from Warsaw. It was already getting dark and we were walking a lot around Warsaw, and this was after being awake most of the night because our flight left Tel Aviv at 5:00 AM. So, needless to say, we were all pretty tired. Yet the cold woke us up as we got off of the bus. Bear in mind, it was very dark and I have a feeling that most people who visit here come in the daytime. Yet Tzvi admitted that he deliberately planned for us to arrive at this hour. We were standing in front of what looked like the entrance to a forest. Yet that thought was erased when you see a wooden sign that said in Polish "Muzeum Treblinka".

We were given candles to walk with to give us some light. This, together with our cell phones, provided enough light, but it did add to the eeriness.

We walked up a path surrounded by a forest, with very tall trees, lush with green and thick grass at our feet, following what were the train tracks that led to the station in front of this death camp. The Nazis tore down the place to hide evidence, and boy did they do a good job. The sole remaining witnesses were all around us, yet silent as trees do not talk. But they were there and witnessed everything.

The cobble-stoned platform as well as some of the remnants of the tracks are still there. My heart shuddered when I realized that I was standing on the very platform where nearly one million Jews stood only an hour or so before they were rushed to the gas chambers and murdered in the most heinous ways. Herded towards the pathway nicknamed "Der Himmelstrasse" (The Way to Heaven) accompanied by screaming guards armed with clubs and whips, alongside fierce, angry German Shepherds just ready to attack. There was one building that by the time people got there, they were already stark naked. Apparently there was a velvet curtain in front that was stolen from a synagogue ark that read "זה השער לה' צדיקים יבואו בו" (Trans: "This is the gate to GD where the righteous are called in").

This building listed as showers was nothing more than a gas chamber where an estimated 900,000 (probably much more) men, women, children and infants were murdered in masse. There was another building with a Swiss red cross on it designated for those who felt ill. Tzvi mentioned that according to testimonies, the entrance was a waiting room with a sofa and plush red carpet, yet behind the door was a pit with a burning fire, where the victim was shot in the head on pushed in to incinerate.

Aside from the memorial where the gas chamber stood and tombstones representing communities that perished there in large numbers, nothing else exists, except for the vast, lush green forest that surrounds the area. From what I have read and understood, this forest grew lush and large quickly as it fed off of the bodies beneath it.

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As an overly sensitive person, I couldn't help but notice one thing – we weren't alone. They were still there. I heard no voices, saw no sightings, but I felt a presence and it was strong. They haven't left. They were throughout the entire area. There was nothing I could say but I shed tears that I kept to myself.

We davened ma'ariv (the evening prayer) together and we shouted out: "Shema Yisrael Hashem Eleokeinu Hashem Echad" and "Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto L'olam Vaed" as if it were Yom Kippur, the only time one shouts these words out aloud and together. For the remainder of the year, we say it to ourselves.

This is one ma'ariv that I will never forget as long as I live.

To read Rashi's full essay on Shivtei Yisrael's three-day trip to Poland, please contact him on: 0508232885 or rashi.rosenzweig@gmail.com



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כס"ד

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Vered Dror Nevii



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GINA JUNGER



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DEBORAH DICKSON



**The Parasha Pages
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The Parasha Pages Collective will work like a 'Book Club'. It will be a collaboration of everyone's ideas on the weekly Parasha. Everyone will commit to find something interesting to share about the parasha each week and we will meet, share and discuss ideas together. We will create a really interesting, interactive and intellectual parasha study group. All are welcome - and if you prefer to listen rather than contribute ideas you are of course also welcome!



BY DR. BATYA L. LUDMAN, PSY.D.

OUR GIFT AS A CARING COMMUNITY

As I write, we are about to embrace the New Year, with Rosh Hashanah a mere six weeks away. I cannot help but see that we really do have much to look forward to. Elul is without a doubt my favorite time of the year. It's a time to reflect, not only on what went wrong but more importantly, to focus on what went right. It is a reminder of how fortunate we are to be able to look inward and choose to turn the metaphorical page – to appreciate all that we have, but to also strive to do better, try harder and be the best version of ourselves that we can be.

Yes, without a doubt these past few years between COVID and internal political strife have

been difficult to say the least. However, we can leave the past year behind and start anew. It is a choice we each make. Why hold on to things from the past that we can choose to let go – negative aspects of our relationships that have not brought us comfort? Perhaps we have stubbornly opted to dig in our heels in our need to be right, rather than focus on our desire to work together on the “same” team. I am reminded of the educational games we played with our children in years gone by. In order to win, we each had to cooperate with our opponents. If not, we all lost. I love to see this time of the year as one of working harder, and changing things up so that we honor who we each want to be and in that, we all win.

“None of us should ever feel lonely. As we grow in size, it will be wonderful as we all grow together as a community.”

As we start the New Year and see the “new” Beit Knesset in its regal state of purity and white, we are reminded that renewal and new beginnings are virtually everywhere, if we are open to seeing them. This is indeed the blessing we are each given, if we simply choose to look around and appreciate all that we have.

A few months ago, I gave a talk at Seudah Shlishit with Rabbi Bendavid. The topic was “Jewish and Psychological Perspectives on Friendship and Loneliness.” As I looked around the shul hall, it was a reminder of all the good that we have in each of our community members. When I sit in shul and close my eyes momentarily to soak in the beautiful voices in unison during Kabbalat Shabbat, I reflect for a just a second on all that I have. What an absolute privilege to live here. I am reminded of this enormous gift, this phenomenal country that I call home and that many of us so sadly take for granted or fail to appreciate. Each of us too, as individuals, make up our Shivtei community, and this too is our home.

Yet, in this day and age, with technology as it is, it is so easy to be connected with others, but still feel so isolated. While we may have hundreds or even thousands of Facebook friends, if we should need someone for support or to call in the middle of the night, to reach out to and ask a favor, we may feel as if we have no one. It is therefore not surprising that the Office of the U.S. Surgeon General has described loneliness as being more widespread than other major health issues and sees loneliness and isolation as a major public health concern. The consequences on our mental and physical health and collective well-being can be huge. Feeling socially disconnected increases our risk for depression and anxiety, heart disease, stroke and dementia and a host of other issues. While other problems such as poor health, chronic pain, loss of a loved one or a job, retirement and other life transitions compound the problem among the aging population, many of our teens and young adults having lived for the past several years more

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CONTINUED - CARING COMMUNITY

isolated, are also greatly impacted. It is special that the community we have here at Shivtei offers a remedy for that isolation in the bonds we build here.

Now each one of us has to reach out, not just to our friends, but also to others in our own community with whom our relationships may have faded over time and perhaps even more importantly to those whom we don't really know. We know that good social connectedness can revitalize us as well as others and has a significant impact on our health and well-being. This leads to decreased stress, better mental and physical health, living longer, increased happiness, greater resilience and so much more. As we grow as a community, it is more important than ever to prioritize and invest in one another. As we work to create and nurture new relationships, through something so simple as a smile or kind gesture, we may just discover that not only do we make others feel good but that we grow as well. This is indeed our strength.

I personally have benefitted from others in our community simply asking if they can put my siddur back or sending a what's app to see if I was okay when I had been away and was not in shul for a few weeks.

It feels good to know that others care. I think we all can benefit. One congregant sends a personalized message to many people every week without fail before Shabbat. It simply involves being present emotionally and taking the time to care.

So, as we move into the Yamim Noraim this year, perhaps just one goal for each and every one of us can be to reach out to others in the Shivtei community. Having a friend is being a friend. So, be it a smile, a Shabbat Shalom, asking someone how they are and taking the time to listen, offering to pick something up for someone if they don't drive, inviting someone for a Shabbat meal, meeting for coffee, learning together, there is much we can each do.

Encouraging your children and grandchildren too to reach out to someone they don't know and to learn from their different life experiences will also be a win-win for all. None of us should ever feel lonely. As we grow in size, it will be wonderful as we all grow together as a community.

I wish for you and your loved ones a Chag filled with all that you would like it to be, tremendous meaning, and a year ahead of much good health.

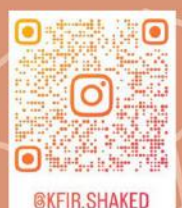


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BY ANDI SAITOWITZ, CBP

CHANGE IS HARD AT FIRST

“Change is hard at first, messy in the middle, and gorgeous at the end.”

A friend recently asked me how we get from the hard to the gorgeous – how do we handle the messy middle best?

I sat contemplating the roads I’ve traveled, through my own transformational journey and the inspirational journeys of all my remarkable clients who demonstrate incredible strength taking the necessary steps to create meaningful purpose-driven change in their lives.

I made aliyah, alone, at eighteen years old, came to study a difficult degree in Hebrew, changed careers, launched a business, battled a complex pain diagnosis with my child, and lost loved ones. I have, like all of us, lived through a global pandemic, whilst recovering from a traumatic, unexpected surgery and most recently did a massive home renovation which is the ideal metaphor for everything messy in the middle.

Life has many challenges and surprises for us, indeed.

I wish I knew the precise answer. I do know this:

Strength comes from doing hard things. It comes from showing up despite the pain or fear and frustration and going through the struggle, the endurance, and then building on that, to keep going forward and upward towards a goal or clear desired outcome.

Strength comes from taking the time to notice and acknowledge what you have managed to do and accomplish until now. So much of the time we go through things without realizing what massive effort something took, and we minimize the entire experience because we only focus on the end result and not the process. Focus on where you are now and how far you have come.



“Change is the only constant & the best way to get from the hard through the messy to the gorgeous is through daily doses of self-compassion.”

Strength comes from paying close attention to the small significant wins and incremental gains along the way. Strength comes from tracking progress and celebrating, one tiny bit at a time. Each milestone matters.

Strength comes from within—from activating your faith and belief. Knowing why you do what you do, even when it’s not easy.

Strength comes from aligning with your core values and living with integrity even when no one is watching, and you aren’t in the mood. When we connect to what truly matters to us, we are stronger. When we believe there is a bigger plan and are hopeful about an outcome, we feel empowered and stronger.

Strength comes from without—by surrounding ourselves with people who lift us up. It comes from selecting role models and learning from them. It comes from community and togetherness; we don’t have to go it alone.

Strength comes from grabbing lessons and blessings, often disguised as awful mistakes, setbacks and failures.

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CONTINUED - CHANGE IS HARD

Strength comes from collecting moments you are genuinely proud of and taking the time to truly recognize these events for what they are and what they enabled you to accomplish.

Don't overlook them. You get to use these strengths in countless ways and in other areas of your life.

The strongest people I know have all gone from the hard through the messy to the gorgeous. Many times!

They know how to be proud of themselves with humility and honesty.

They know how to pick their circles wisely and accept help, compliments, and advice.

The strongest people I know feel everything.

The strongest people I know are the kindest.

The strongest people I know have wells of inner resources that are sometimes invisible to the naked eye.

The strongest people I know can say sorry and forgive others.

The strongest people I know can forgive themselves.

The strongest people I know fall down hard, and slowly, with every ounce of courage, bravery, and might, find a way to get back up again, battered, bruised, and aching. And keep going.

The strongest people I know have incredible hearts that expand wider with each hurdle.

The strongest people I know have endured so much and yet still find their smile to light up the world for others. And show them how they did it.

The strongest people I know teach me every single day how to try and be just a little bit stronger myself.

Change is the only constant in our lives and the best way to get from the hard through the messy to the gorgeous is through daily doses of self-compassion.

"Feeling good doesn't just happen. Living a life in balance means taking the necessary time to renew yourself. It's all up to you. You can renew yourself through relaxation. Or you can totally burn yourself out by overdoing everything. You can pamper yourself mentally and spiritually. Or you can go through life oblivious to your well-being. You can experience vibrant energy. Or you can procrastinate and miss out on the benefits of good health and exercise. You can revitalize yourself and face a new day in peace and harmony. Or you can wake up in the morning full of apathy because your get-up-and-go has got-up-and-gone. Just remember that every day provides a new opportunity for renewal – a new opportunity to recharge yourself instead of hitting the wall. All it takes is the desire, knowledge, and skill."

It is a trainable competency, like any other muscle, that we can build up over time.

"Strength doesn't come from what you can do. It comes from overcoming the things you thought you couldn't."

Andi Saitowitz, CBP
www.andisaitowitz.com



BY ARNY BELLER

THE KING OF SECOND CHANCES

לעילוי נשמת הרב דניאל בן מרכי ז"ל

Shlomo come immediately to mind. But the monarchy in Israel lasted many years beyond the reign of these three kings. Among the kings who followed them were some who had a lasting impact on the Jewish people both as personalities and as rulers. One who stands out for me is King Chizkiyahu.

Chizkiyahu was the king of Yehuda at a time when the Jewish people were actually divided into two kingdoms - that of Yehuda and that of Shomron/Yisroel. We know he was a figure of importance as he appears at length in three different books in Tanach – Melachim (Kings), Divrei Hayamim (Chronicles) and Yeshayahu. More than that, however, the Torah assesses him as a righteous man and king and gives him its highest accolade – he has reached the standard of King David - the gold standard.

"מלכים ב, יח, ג: " ויעש הישר בעיני ה' ככל אשר עשה דוד אביו"

To give an idea of who Chizkiyahu was and why his persona is important to us today let me bring two stories that illustrate his life, both as a man and as a king. In the first story (chronologically the second) we find Chizkiyahu in his later years. We could consider these the most successful years of his reign. He has created a revolution of religious reform that would put Chabad to shame. He has been working on creating political stability. He is effective, respected and clearly genuine in his connection to Hashem and Torah. One might predict that his righteous life would be rewarded and all would be well. Yet, suddenly, without warning, Chizkiyahu becomes fatally ill. His cousin Yishayahu the prophet comes to the palace and pronounces his fate: "Make your will you are about to die!" How does this make sense? The Talmud in Brachot Yud (B) gives one explanation for these events:



“As everyone knows, history runs in cycles & problems that seem insurmountable today may have obvious answers tomorrow.”

In the text, Chizkiyahu turns to the Prophet Yishayahu to learn what he has done wrong. Yishayahu explains to him that his wrongdoing was in deliberately choosing not to have children. In his defense, Chizkiyahu explains to Yishayahu that he had had a prophecy in which he learned that his son Menashe would be evil and undermine all the good that he had achieved. He had decided it was better that he not have any children.

To this Yishayahu replies: It is not for you to try to control all your circumstances you needed to do what you needed to do and Hashem needs to do what He needed to do.

At this point a contrite Chizkiyahu has a creative idea. Let me, he says to Yeshayahu, marry your daughter; surely in the merit of the two of us our children will be good. To this, Yishayahu replies harshly:

בְּרַגְזָה עָלֶיךָ גְזִירָה !

"It's too late, the decree has already been decreed against you and this judgment cannot be changed!"

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CONTINUED - SECOND CHANCES

Now Chizkiyahu becomes angry. He believes that Yishayahu has strayed from the realm of prophecy to that of personal opinion. A decree has been made against Chizkiyahu but the idea that there was no changing the decree was only Yishyahu's opinion. Chizkiyahu answers the prophet back:

“בֶּן אַמוֹץ, כִּלְה נְבוּאָתְךָ וְצֵא
כִּי מְקוּבְלִי מִבֵּית אָבִי אֲבָא, אֶפְּלוּ חֶרֶב חֲדָה מוֹנַחַת עַל
צִוְאָרוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם, אֵל יִמְנַע עֲצָמוֹ מִן הַרְחָמִים!

“Son of Amoz, cease your prophecy and leave. I have received a tradition from the house of my father's father, from King David, the founding father of the dynasty of kings of Judea. Even if a sharp sword rests upon a person's neck, he should not prevent himself from praying for mercy. One may still hold out hope that his prayers will be answered!”

Who is right? The Torah tells us that it is Chizkiyahu. Hashem always gives us another chance, and indeed in the book of Yishayahu Hashem says this clearly:

“הֲלוֹךְ וְאָמַרְתָּ אֶל־חֲזַקְיָהוּ כֹה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי דָוִד אֲבִיךָ
שָׁמַעְתִּי אֶת־תְּפִלָּתְךָ רָאִיתִי אֶת־דַּמְעֹתֶיךָ הִנְנִי יוֹסֵף עַל־יְמֶיךָ
חֲמֵשׁ עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה:

“Go and tell Chizkiyahu: Thus said God, the God of your forefather David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears. I hereby add fifteen years to your life.”

This is the true mesorah: there is always a second chance. The second story occurs following a great calamity for the Jewish people. The King of Ashur to the north of Israel captured and exiled to Ashur a major part of the population of the kingdom of Shomron and took their King Hoshea Ben Elah captive. What was left was a kingless, weak, depleted population. Chizkiyahu decided to take action. Surely this was the time to embrace the remaining population in Shomron and to try to unify the nation of Israel again. It's hard to exaggerate how bold and visionary this idea was. By this time the Jewish people had been divided for nearly 200 years! How could unity be achieved? Chizkiyahu looked for some event that might speak to the population of both kingdoms. He chose Pesach, as that was the moment when the whole nation acted as one, defied their Egyptian masters, rejected the Egyptian gods and pledged their allegiance to Hashem.

It might seem that it would be a simple task to invite the peoples of Shomron to join in a unified Korban Pesach but there were some complications. When the first king of Shomron, King Yeravam Ben Navat, came to power he was determined to solidify his position and did this through several decrees that widened the disconnection between the kingdoms. He forbade his people from traveling to the Beit HaMikdash and set up alternate places of worship at the borders of the kingdom. Then he cleverly changed the calendar so that none of the dates of the holidays in Shomron would coincide with the Yehuda holidays and the two peoples would never be celebrating together.

The result was that in Chizkiyahu's time, a unified Pesach meant asking the people of Shomron to travel to a Temple they were no longer familiar with on a date that they no longer considered a Chag. When Chizkiyahu sent messengers to invite the Shomronites to join the Kingdom of Yehuda in sacrificing a Korban Pesach in the Beit Hamikdash, the messengers were met with mockery and only a small group agreed to come.

דברי הימים ב, ל"ו, "ויהיו הרצים עוברים מעיר לעיר... יהיו משחיקים בהם מלעגים בהם"

Chizkiyahu was persistent and had the support of his own people, but he also made three radical decisions. First, he pushed the date of celebrating Pesach a month forward, second, he made a decree that only the Levi tribe would actually carry out the sacrifice, third he decided to let the Shomronites partake of the sacrifice even though they were not all in the state of purity that was necessary.

In this way, he circumvented the problem of who was and was not eligible to carry out the sacrifice; he managed the issue of conflicting dates, and he allowed for inclusivity when it came to actually eating the Korban.

(In the scope of this article I will not go into the halachik implications of Chizkiyahu's decision or on what halachik bases Chizkiyahu used for going ahead with his decision not to mention conflicting criticism and praise he received for it.)

For Chizkiyahu this was a now or never moment. It required a clear vision of a nation that could be

CONTINUED

CONTINUED - SECOND CHANCES

unified even after 200 years of division, as well as great confidence – and courage. When he makes his decision to allow the Shomronites to eat the Korban Pesach we see Chizkiyahu asking Hashem to understand and forgive any sin.

(דברי הימים ב' ל, יח) כִּי מְרַבֵּית הָעַם רִבְתָּ מֵאֲפָרַיִם וּמְנַשֶּׁה יִשְׁשַׁכֵּר וּזְבֻלוֹן לֹא הִטְהָרוּ כִּי־אָכְלוּ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח בְּלֹא כִכְתֹּב כִּי הִתְפַּלֵּל יַחֲזִיקֵהוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לֵאמֹר יְהוָה הַטּוֹב יִכְפֹּר בְּעַד:

For most of the people—many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun—had not purified themselves, yet they ate the paschal sacrifice in violation of what was written. Chizkiyahu prayed for them, saying, "The good Lord will provide atonement for it."

Was Chizkiyahu right in this decision? The Talmud is fairly critical of him but the verses of Neviim and the accompanying commentators give him support. In Diveri Hayamim 30, Verse 20, the text tells us:

יִשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל־יַחֲזִיקָיו וַיִּרְפָּא אֶת־הָעָם:

The Lord heard Chizkiyahu and healed the people. On this verse Radak (Rav David Kimchi) comments: "He accepted the sacrifice and healed them from sin that was connected to it."

The chapter finishes with a verse describing the great joy felt by all:

יִוְתְּהִי שִׂמְחָה־גְדוֹלָה בִּירוּשָׁלַם כִּי מִיָּמֵי שְׁלֹמֹה בְּרִדְוִיד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא כָזְאת בִּירוּשָׁלַם

There was great rejoicing in Jerusalem, for since the time of King Solomon son of David of Israel nothing like it had happened in Jerusalem!"

For Chizkiyahu nothing was more important than finding a way back to a unified people, even if it called for radical creativity, taking chances, and risking scorn and criticism. For me it is a very short mental leap from Chizkiyahu's time to the atmosphere we are experiencing today. As in Chizkiyahu's time, sometimes the obstacles to national unity seem insurmountable. I hear influencers and writers putting out headlines that imply that they can think of no other way to resolution but dissolution. My answer to them is that they have then not thought enough! As everyone knows, history runs in cycles and problems that seem insurmountable today may have obvious answers tomorrow. But we may need more patience, we will need persistence and we will certainly need courage –

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כתיבה והתימה טובה

Judith Schwarcz

052-2488288 moogy@netvision.net.il

www.dyslexia.org.il

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