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המאור

Light reading  
HaMaor

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Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech, Elul 5784

## Two Opposite Motions in Positive Growth

### Tiferes Shlomo on the Parsha

אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני ד' אלהיכם  
*You are standing this day, all of you,  
before Hashem Your G-d*

The commentators teach that “this day” alludes to the day of Rosh Hashana. The Pasuk is teaching us the appropriate way to approach our prayers at this time and that is to focus our prayers on the honour of Hashem, rather than our own personal, material needs. This means to concern ourselves with the fact that the Divine Presence is in Exile and we wish to see the Shechina restored to its state of Glory.

This is alluded to in the verse in Tehillim (102:1) תפלה לפני כי יעטרך – a prayer of the poor man when he is faint and before Hashem he pours forth his plea.” Even though the poor man has his own, many needs, he puts his own needs aside and focuses his prayers on that which is “before Hashem”.

The Tiferes Shlomo also reads this idea into a Gemara in Mesechta Rosh Hashana (8b) which teaches “When a king and the community are to be judged, the king is brought in for judgment first.” According to one opinion, the reason for this is that it is not appropriate (respectful) for the king to remain outside (while the people of the community are being judged).

When we stand before Hashem to Daven, we can either focus on “the King”, the honour of Hashem, or on “the community”, referring to our own personal material needs.

The Gemara teaches that the first and primary focus of our prayers should be the King. It is not appropriate to ignore that which relates to Hashem - leaving the King on the outside of our thoughts, while we first concern ourselves with our own needs.

*Dear Rabbi,*

***I know that Rosh Hashona is a time for making new resolutions and increasing our observance. But I don't quite feel ready to take on something new and I know that if I did, I would struggle to keep it. I feel that I just need to consolidate where I am holding at the moment. Is this a problem? Am I just being lazy?***

Your desire to consolidate is the perfect new year resolution! That's real positive growth.

This week we read the combined Parshios of Nitzavim-Vayeilech. The names of the two Parshios describe two completely different movements. Nitzavim means to stand firmly in one's place. Vayeleich means to move. Yet we read them together as one Parsha with one message. How does that work?

Man is distinguished from the angels by being called a mehalech – a mover. Unlike the angels, we have the ability to grow and progress in our spiritual lives. Striving for constant growth and self-improvement is expected of us.

So Vayeilech makes sense – we have to move! But where does Nitzavim fit in? What is the Avodah of standing still when we are supposed to be moving?

The answer is that sometimes stopping is actually a form and part of moving. Let me illustrate through the following Halacha:

On Shabbos we are not allowed to carry something from a Reshus Harabim (halachically defined public domain) to a Reshus Hayachid (halachically defined private domain) or vice versa. It is also prohibited to carry an item a distance of four Amos in the public domain.

To be Biblically liable for carrying, one needs to complete the full act of both picking up the object (Akira) in one domain and placing the object down (Hanacha) in the other. Stopping while carrying the object also qualifies as Hanacha.

The Talmud (Shabbos 5b) teaches that if someone carries all day between the public and private domain without once stopping, they have not violated Shabbos on the Biblical level. This is because whilst there was Akira, there was no Hanacha.

But not every stop is considered a real stop. Stopping to rest (Omed Lafush) is a real stop and would

qualify as Hanacha.

Stopping to adjust the load you are carrying (Omed Lakatef) is not considered a stop. Rather it is an integral part of moving. Unless the load is comfortable and properly balanced, moving forward would be counter-productive. It would be uncomfortable and you would risk the load falling altogether. This type of stopping is not considered Hanacha.

What makes a stop a stop? It really comes down to what is the purpose of the pause.

This is the message of Nitzavim-Vayeilech. Both modes are parts of our quest for spiritual growth. Sometimes we grow by moving forward and sometimes we grow through pausing to consolidate and adjust our load.

We read these Parshios before Rosh Hashona because they are the model for how to ensure we will successfully fulfil our new year resolutions.

Standing still to 'rest' or to take a break from having to move forward – the attitude that I'm just fine where I am and don't need to do any more – is not positive. This is stagnation.

But sometimes we do need to stop in order to progress. Implementing a new resolution is difficult. Many times we don't succeed straight away.

When you take on a new resolution or Hiddur Mitzvah, you have to integrate it and adjust to it until it becomes comfortable. Once you have it securely in place, then you are ready for the next step. You can't move forward to a higher goal before having acclimatised to your current state. By moving ahead to far and to fast we risk losing everything. This would be the opposite of growth.

You sound like you are definitely committed to growing but just need to consolidate in order to spring forward with your next step. This type of 'stopping' is not a stop at all. Rather it is a necessary part of your forward movement. This is Nitzavim, which is a perfectly satisfactory step forward on your journey until you are ready for your next Vayeilech.

**Wishing all of our readers a** כתיבה וחתימה טובה לשנה טובה ומתוקה, **a sweet new year filled with meaningful and lasting growth in our observance, Torah study and our relationship with Hashem.**

# The Weekly Halacha Analysis

## Differing Customs of Hagbah - part 2

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### Which Direction to Turn

In Mesechta Sofrim, it states that one turns to show the people at one's right and then to one's left.

The Acharonim explain that when Mesechta Sofrim states that one first shows the people at one's right and then to one's left, it refers to when Hagbah was performed with the writing on the outside. This would be achieved by turning from east to south when Hagbah is performed facing the Aron Kodesh to the east

However, according to the Ashkenazi custom of having the writing facing the one performing Hagbah, by turning from east to south, one will be showing the writing to those on their left first. This is still done, because one should always turn first to their right.

Some have the custom of turning a full circle<sup>1</sup>. However, based on the wording of Mesechta Sofrim, others have the custom to turn around 180 degrees to one side and after returning to face the front, turn 180 degrees to the other side and return again to face the front.

The turning should be done slowly<sup>2</sup> to allow everyone to see the writing.

It is recorded that the Rebbe once demonstrated Hagbah to the students of the Yeshivah, turning around 180 degrees to the left and afterwards to the right. In contrast to the custom mentioned above, this would be in keeping with showing the writing to those on the right first as per Mesechta Sofrim, based on our custom of having the writing facing the one lifting the Torah.

### Bowing

Even though Mesechta Sofrim mentions bowing towards the Sefer Torah and this is brought in Shulchan Aruch, many do not do so<sup>3</sup>. One must stand at the time of Hagbah<sup>4</sup>. Some have the custom to bow slightly.

There is an age-old custom brought in Sefarim<sup>5</sup> of raising one's pinky finger when saying Vezos Hatorah and afterwards to kiss their finger. This is not the Chabad custom<sup>6</sup>.

### Pesukim

In Mesechta Sofrim it states that we recite Vezos Hatorah and Toras Hashem Temimah. This is brought in the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch<sup>7</sup>. However, in almost all Nusachos the Pasuk Toras Hashem is not recited<sup>8</sup>. Sefardi Nusachos include the verse Torah Tziva Lanu<sup>9</sup> and Ha-El Tamim Darko<sup>10</sup>.

Many Siddurim, including the Siddur Shela"h and Yaavetz, add the words Al Pi Hashem

Beyad Moshe after Vezos Hatorah. This is the standard Nusach Ashkenaz.

Many Acharonim, including the Aruch Hashulchan<sup>11</sup> are perplexed by the custom of adding the words Al Pi Hashem Beyad Moshe. It comes from a completely different Pasuk<sup>12</sup> and has no connection to Vezos Hatorah. Further, it is not mentioned in Mesechta Sofrim.

Others also question that these additional words are the concluding words of a Pasuk and we are not generally permitted to say only part of a Pasuk. It is recorded in the name of Rav Chaim of Volozhin that one should say the entire Pasuk from its beginning.

The extra words Al Pi Hashem are not included in Nusach Ari or Sefardi Nusachos. This was also the Nusach preferred by the Minchas Elozor<sup>13</sup>.

One should only begin saying Vezos Hatorah when they see the writing of the Torah<sup>14</sup>.

### Who Rolls the Torah Closed

The Gemara in Mesechta Megillah teaches that the Gadol should be the Gollel (the one who rolls the Torah) and that they receive the reward equal to all of those who were called to the Torah.

The Beis Yosef<sup>15</sup> brings two opinions. According to one opinion the Gemara means the Gadol means the "great one" from amongst all of those in the Shule. However, others understand that it means the Gadol from those who were called to the Torah. The Shulchan Aruch<sup>16</sup> rule like the latter opinion. However the Ram"o<sup>17</sup> and Magen Avraham rule like the former opinion. Mishna Berura<sup>18</sup> notes that nowadays, in the interest of peace, we share this honour with people of lesser stature as well.

According to Mesechta Sofrim, which is custom of the Sefardim, Hagbah is performed prior to the leining and the one who lifts the Torah, also rolls it closed afterwards. Accordingly, the "Gollel", the one who rolls the Torah closed refers to the one who performs Hagbah.

Over the generations, it became custom is Ashkenaz to honour 2 different people; one for Hagbah and one for Gelilah. The Magbiah lifts the Torah and then sits while it is still open. The Gollel rolls the Torah closed<sup>19</sup> and dresses it in its Mantle. This honour is often given to a child in order to educate them in Mitzvos<sup>20</sup>.

Aruch Hashulchan<sup>21</sup> is puzzled by the custom of giving Hagbah to a Gadol and Gelilah to a person of lesser stature (or child), since the Gemara states that the Gollel should be a Gadol and that they receive the greater reward<sup>22</sup>.

He notes the custom in the Chassidic Shules, that

the one performing Hagbah places the Sefer Torah back on the bimah and rolls to the Torah closed, thereby performing Gelilah. Then, when they are seated, someone of lesser stature dresses the Torah.

This is the Chabad custom<sup>23</sup>. When asked about the Chabad custom of the Magbiah putting the Torah back on the Bimah and rolling it closed, the Rebbe<sup>24</sup> referenced the words of the Aruch Hashulchan, noting that he was "from the heads of the Ashkenazim".

The Rebbe suggests a number of reasons for this custom;

1. We try to minimise the time that the Torah scroll is open and wish to roll it closed as soon as possible, since leaving the Torah open is disrespectful<sup>25</sup>. This is also why we cover the Torah between Aliyos<sup>26</sup>.
2. We wish to reduce division between customs. For Sefardim, who do Hagbah before leining, the one who does the Hagbah also does the rolling when they place the Torah on the Bimah and close it. We likewise ensure that the one performing Hagbah also rolls the Torah closed<sup>27</sup>.
3. It ensures that the rolling is done with less risk of falling, which is more likely when someone else rolls it closed.

The Gabbai should only call someone for Hagbah who they know to be strong enough to perform Hagbah. One should not take the honour of Hagbah if they know that they are not strong enough to perform it<sup>28</sup>.

1. The Chazon Ish is recorded to have performed a full circle and afterwards turned again slightly to the right before returning to face forward.
2. Shaarei Efraim 10:13
3. See Siddur Yaavetz. Acharonim write to justify the practice.
4. Elya Rabbah
5. Meam Loez Ki Savo,
6. Sefer Haminhagim
7. Orach Chaim 134:2
8. Daas Torah explains that the intent of Mesechta Sofrim is that we recite either of the 2 verses.
9. Devarim 33:4
10. Shmuel 2 22:31
11. Orach Chaim 134:3
12. Bamidbar 10:13
13. Darkei Chaim Veshalom 224
14. Shaarei Efraim 10:13
15. Orach Chaim 147
16. 147:1
17. Darkei Moshe
18. 147:7
19. Mishna Berura, Shaarei Efraim 10:18, 19
20. Mishna Berura 147:7
21. 147:9
22. Those who follow the custom explain that that main reward is for the one performing Hagbah. The Gemara refers to them as the Gollel because in those times they also rolled the Torah closed as described above. This explanation is difficult, because the Gemara specifically uses the word Gollel.
23. Sefer Haminhagim
24. Igros Kodesh 18 p427
25. Levush
26. Shulchan Aruch 139:5
27. Based on Shaarei Efraim 10:19
28. Shaarei Efraim 10:14