



# פרשה Parsha Insights & News



Parshat Nitzavim-Vayelech

SEPT 8, 2007 – 25 Elul 5767

The Orthodox Union West Coast Office 9831 W. Pico Blvd., LA, CA 90035 Please visit [www.ouwestcoast.org](http://www.ouwestcoast.org)  
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### Teshuva: Understanding the Gift

*You shall return to Hashem your God, and you will obey Him, ... You and your children with all your heart and with all your soul. For this mitzvah that I am prescribing to you today is not too mysterious or remote from you. (Devarim, 30-2,11)*

The careful reader will note that the subject of our text (this mitzvah) remains ambiguous. Many (Ramban, Seforno, ibid) assume that our parsha refers to the teshuva (repentance, return) imperative<sup>1</sup>. Teshuva is not merely a good idea; rather its mitzvah classification makes it like other positive mitzvot. It might follow that failure to engage in teshuva is equivalent to nullifying a positive mitzvah, much like one who neglects to lay tefillin for a day.

Teshuva however is far more than a mitzvah. Its very effect transcends the scope of all other mitzvot. It effectuates a change of the past and as such it represents a great gift from God. Witness the following Talmudic comment<sup>2</sup>.

*Rabbi Pinchas said: "They inquired of Wisdom, "What is the punishment of a sinner?" Wisdom said: "Evil pursues the wicked"(Mishlei, 13:21). They inquired of Prophecy, "What is the punishment of the sinner?" Prophecy said "The sinful soul shall die"(Yechezkel,18:20). They inquired of the Holy One: "What is the punishment of the sinner?". He said to them "Let him repent and he shall be forgiven".*

Much can be found in the midrash. At its core, it conveys that Teshuva defies intellectual reasoning and transcends prophetic wisdom. It is a Divine gift.

Similarly, a compelling Talmudic account<sup>3</sup> records that wicked King Menashe, (who had placed an idol in the Beis HaMikdash) after being taken captive by Assyria, turning to his father's (Chizkiyah) God as a last resort and engaging in a pragmatic teshuva. Hashem, above the angels' protestations, accepts his teshuva. Failure to do so would cast aspersions for all future aspiring returnees.

We may now understand a cryptic piece of Talmud (Pesachim (54a) ) that relates:

*Seven things were created before the world was created ... : The Torah, Repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the name of the Messiah. Repentance, for it is written, Before the mountains were brought forth, ....(Tehillim,90)*

If Teshuva "preceded" the natural world, then it need not and does not conform to nature<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, Mesilat Yesharim's explicitly formulates<sup>5</sup> that Teshuva's novelty is its ability, via thought, to wipe away a past action.

And yet ... A striking piece of Talmud seems to wreak havoc upon this notion<sup>6</sup>:

*R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Even if he is perfectly righteous all his life but rebels at the end, he destroys his former [good deeds], for it is said: The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression. ... Said Resh Lakish: It means that he regretted his former deeds.*

Just as one who engages in proper teshuva may nullify his past, so one who has charata (regret) may

wipe away his past mitzvot. It would appear that teshuva is not unique nor is it a special gift; rather it merely conforms to the Divine playbook. - a bidirectional metaphysical notion that subsequent thought can erase prior deed!?

This very question was posed by Rav Elchonon Wasserman to his Rebbe, the Chofetz Chaim - who responded by drawing upon a classic distinction between two types of teshuva.

*Resh Lakish said: Great is repentance, for because of it, premeditated sins are accounted as errors (unintentional sins), but didn't Reish Lakish also say that repentance is so great that premeditated sins are transformed into merits, That is no contradiction: One refers to a case [of repentance] derived from love, the other to one due to fear.(Yoma 86b)*

Teshuva from fear does not transcend the halachic world. It merely serves to nullify the past in the same manner as one who regrets his positive past. Teshuva from love (teshuvah m'ei'ahava) however, said the Chofetz Chaim, is God's incredible gift. Rather than merely nullifying the past, it transforms it! In explaining the spiritual mechanics, Rav Dessler taught that since the sin served as the catalyst for the returnee to come close with God, the sin ultimately becomes a rung in the ascendant ladder of spirituality.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman himself offered a second approach: Sin and Mitzvah have residual effects. Most basic is the reward and punishment that stems from their performance. But there is more. Sin is *metamei*; it besmirches the soul and leaves it distant from God. Conversely, Mitzvah refines the soul and draws it nearer to the Divine<sup>7</sup>.

While regret of a mitzvah might serve to revoke the formal reward; the *neshama* remains in close proximity with its Creator. It is thus impossible to wipe away the "soul effect" of a mitzvah.

Herein, says R. Elchonon is the secret of the gift known as Teshuva - for it not only mitigates the punishment of sin, it dissolves the very stain brought onto the soul, bridging the gap between man and God and creating an incredible intimacy.

Thus Rambam's comments<sup>8</sup> are indeed striking and with his words shall we close.

How great is Teshuva that it brings man close to the Shechina... Yesterday he was hateful in the sight of Hashem - despised, forsaken and repulsive- and today he is beloved desirable, near and befriended.

May we all merit such a blessing for 5768

**Rabbi Asher Brander,**  
Westwood Kehilla  
West Los Angeles

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<sup>1</sup> It would appear from the Rambam (Teshuva,1:1) that the act of return does not constitute a formal mitzvah of Teshuva (see Minchas Chinuch 364)  
<sup>2</sup> Yerushalmi Makkot,2: 6  
<sup>3</sup> Yerushalmi Makkot, 10:2  
<sup>4</sup> Teshuva is also listed separately from Torah, implying that some aspect of Teshuva also transcends the halachic universe.  
<sup>5</sup> end of Chapter 4  
<sup>6</sup> Kiddushin (40b)

### Upcoming Events

#### Shaliach Tzibur Conference

→→→ THIS SUNDAY SEPT 9, 9am

(DAVENING—8am—coffee/danish)

@ OU Headquarters-9831 W. Pico

Keynote Speaker

#### Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Free to members of OU Syn.or \$18/p/p

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310-229-9000 ext 200

Rav Schachter w/b speaking:

Shabbat morning, SEPT 8, YICC

Prior to Mincha, SEPT 9, BJ-BH

Early Selichot, 10:30pm, BJ-BH

Late Selichot, 11:45pm, YICC

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## OU Synagogues Around the Region

**Adas Torah, LA :** (310) 203-9659

- **MONs & WEDs 8:30pm:** Night Seder Chavrusa program
- Daf Yomi – 6:05am. Mincha/Maariv – 10 min b/f shkiah

**Adat Yeshurun, La Jolla:** (858) 535-1196

**Aish Hatorah, LA:** (310) 278-8672 x 720

- Project Inspire has a gift package that includes a small glass jar of gourmet honey and an attractive, friendly and educational fold-out Rosh Hashanah card. Easy Kiruv! Order at wholesale cost from Jenna Wilkin 310-278-5943 or [www.sweetnewyear.com](http://www.sweetnewyear.com)

**Beit HaMidrash, Woodland Hills:** (818) 348-3000

**Beth Israel- Edmonton, Canada:** (780) 488-2840

**Beth Jacob, -BH:** (310) 278-1911

- **Shabbat, SEPT 8-9:** SIR Rabbi Aaron Kotler. Rav Hershel Schachter: @5:30pm–Pre-Mincha; 6:55pm–Shalosh Seudah; 10:30pm–Pre Slichot

- **Shabbat NOV 2-3:** Bioethics Conf for Medical Professionals (CME)

- **Mission to Israel:** MON DEC 24 to Wed JAN 2. Register Now!

- **Young Couples Group.** Judy 310-839-8654 or Karen 310-551-6533 ([judygoldberg@hotmail.com](mailto:judygoldberg@hotmail.com)) ([kgraber@gmail.com](mailto:kgraber@gmail.com))

- **Late maariv minyan @ 8:55pm**—Sun-Th

**Beth Jacob, -Irvine:** (949) 786-5230

**Beth Jacob, Oakland:** (510) 482-1147

**Beth Jacob, -San Diego:** (619) 287-9890

**Beth Joseph, -Phoenix:** (602) 277-8858

**Beth Torah, -Laguna Woods:** (949) 587-1967

**Bikur Cholim Machzikay Hadath, Seattle:** (206) 721-0970

**BMH-BJ Cong-Denver:** (303) 388-4203 Ext 3113

**B'nai David-Judea-LA:** (310)-276-9269 or [amram@bnaidavid.com](mailto:amram@bnaidavid.com)

- **Shabbat NOV 17:** SIR Rabbi Yuval Cherlow

- **Chaverim-Young singles/Couples:** [chaverim@bnaidavid.com](mailto:chaverim@bnaidavid.com)

**Calabasas Shul:** (818) 591-7485

**Desert Synagogue-Palm Springs:** (760) 327-4848

**EDOS, Denver:** (303) 322-7943

- **SUN SEPT 9, 10am-3pm:** Rabbi David Silber & Wendy Ametselem, from the Drisha Institute and welcome to new Rabbi/Mrs. Marc Gittler Emek Beracha, Palo Alto, CA: (650) 857-1800 (Mikva 493-5555)

**Etz Jacob-LA:** (323) 938-2616

**Ezra Bessaroth, Seattle:** (206) 722-5500

**House of Jacob-Mikveh Israel, Calgary, Canada:** (403) 259-3230

**Kesser Israel, Portland, OR:** (503) 975-6968

**Kenesset Israel Torah Center, Sacramento:** (916) 481-1159

**Mogen David Cong:** (310) 556-5609

- **Shabbat SEPT 8:** Welcome Assoc Rabbi Yehuda Moses, Seph-minyan.

- **SAT SEPT 8, 9pm:** Selichot w/Cantor Sam Cohen & Choir

- **SUN SEPT 9, 10am:** Hachnasat Sefer Torah. Procession & seudah

- **SAT SEPT 15, 9pm:** Melave Malkah w/Rabbis Moise BenZaquen & Ezra Batzri, musical selections, Ashkenazi/Sefaradi high holiday prayers

- **Shabbat ½hr prior to mincha,** Navi (Kings I) w/Rabbi Elias, ongoing

- **TUES 7pm:** Community Men's Choir with Cantor Sam Cohen

**Pacific Jewish Center-Venice:** (310) 392-8749

- **MON SEPT 17, 8pm:** Speaker, Rabbi Shalom Tendler @ Cahn home

**Schara Tzedek, Vancouver:** ((604) 736-7607

**Sephardic Bikur Holim, Seattle:** (206) 723-3028

**Shaarei Tefila, Las Vegas:** (702) 384-3565 (Mikva 384-3317)

**Shaarei Tefila, LA (323) 938-7147**

- **SAT SEPT 8, 9pm:** Installation of officers Dinner

- **SAT SEPT 8, 11:30pm:** Selichot Services w/chazzan Robert Klein

**Shaarey Zedek Cong., Valley Village:** (818) 763-0560

**West Coast Torah Center, Beverly Hills:** (310) 271-1180

**Westwood Kehilla:** (310) 441-5288x30

**Young Israel of Calabasas:** (818) 591-0613 4764 Park Granada #208

**Young Israel of Century City:** (310) 273-6954

- **Shabbat:** Rav Hershel Schachter - morning drasha & 11:45pm slichot

- **Judith Levine Pre-High Holiday Memorial Lecture Series:**

- SEPT 8, 5:35pm: Rabbi Yosef Shusterman

- **Beis Medrash Young Couples Group** Shabbat Minyan @ 9:30am

- Call Rabbi Weiner @ 310-273-7914 or [RabbiJW@vicc.org](mailto:RabbiJW@vicc.org)

CONTINUED>>>>

**Young Israel of North B.H.:** (310) 276-7650

- Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur services w/Rabbi Jonathan Shippel

**Yeshiva of Los Angeles (YOLA) :** 310-203-3197

- **M-Th morns & eves:** adults/students chavrusas - email

[yeshivarabbi@juno.com](mailto:yeshivarabbi@juno.com)

- check for minyanim, classes & events at [www.myyola.com](http://www.myyola.com)

### NCSY ANNOUNCEMENTS/EVENTS

**NCSY: 310-229-9000 x 209** [www.westcoastncsy.com](http://www.westcoastncsy.com)

**CITY NCSY:** Call Solly @ 310-557-6582

**Regional Kickoff** this Sunday, meet at NCSY Office at 10am!

**Join us for Shofar blowing,** 1<sup>st</sup> day Rosh Hashana, meet at BJ 3:30pm.

Dinner N' Learning (DNL) @ Pizza World every WEDS 7-8pm,

**JR. NCSY:** (6-8 graders) Call Josh 310-819-0165 or

[ncsyjosh@gmail.com](mailto:ncsyjosh@gmail.com)

### COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

➔ **Bnei Akiva LA**—310-248-2450 [www.bneiakivala.org](http://www.bneiakivala.org)

[bneiakivala@bneiakivala.org](mailto:bneiakivala@bneiakivala.org) for all information

**Now accepting SCHACH orders for Succot** -- If you have not received an **order form** in the mail, please contact the Bnei Akiva office to request one.

➔ **Yavneh Hebrew Academy- SUN SEPT 9, 9:30am-6pm**

7<sup>th</sup> Annual Basketball Marathon to benefit Tomchei Shabbos-LA

5353 W. 3<sup>rd</sup> St-info: Michael Bernstein 310-275-7194

[mkbwuzup@aol.com](mailto:mkbwuzup@aol.com)

The Times for the games are:

**9:30 -10:15 ... 3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Boys**

**10:15 - 11:00 ... 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Girls**

**11:00 - 12:00 ... 7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Boys**

**12:00 - 1:00 ... Rabbis 1:00 - 2:00 ... Adults**

**2:00 - 3:00 ... Beverlywood / Hancock Park 30's / 40's**

**3:00 - 4:00 ... 10<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grade boys 4:00 - 5:00 ... High School Girls**

**5:00 - 6:00 ... College... under 30**

➔ **Bikur Cholim Reception – SUN SEPT 9, 6pm**

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