RBS Shabbaton!

Attention alumni and friends living in Ramat Beit Shemesh!!!

We are proud to announce that the Rosh Yeshiva HaRav Aharon Bina and HaRav Amos Luban will be joining us for an Alumni Shabbaton in RBS! This may be a once in a lifetime experience so be sure not to miss out!

Reserve the date: 25th of Elul, Shabbat Parshat Nitzavim Vayelech (September 3rd-4th)

All davening will be held together. Place and times TBA. All are invited to attend a joint Friday night seudah with their families. In order to plan the seudah we need to know how many people will be coming. If you would like to eat Friday night with the Rosh Yeshiva, HaRav Amos Luban and Uri Kari please let us know ASAP.

Deadline for signing up is August 19th. (We apologize for the last minute notice. There will be a cost for the seudah, details after we know how many people will be joining.)

To make your reservation for the Friday night seudah contact Fred Kahn at afkahn@gmail.com. Please include your name, number of family members, and contact information. Stay tuned for more details on this amazing Shabbat experience!...
HaRav Nebenzahl on Parshat Shoftim

HaRav Nebenzahl asks that his Divrei Torah are not read during Tefillah or the Rabbi’s sermon

Som Tasim Alecha Melech

The Torah tells us "When you come to the Land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you, and possess it, and settle in it, and you will say, 'I will set a king over myself, like all the nations that are around me'”. The Torah then instructs us: "You shall surely set over yourself a king whom Hashem, your G-d, shall choose" (Devarim 17:14-15), followed by specific details associated with this commandment. The Tanaim, Amoraim, and even later Poskim dispute whether upon entering the land there is a specific Mitzvah to appoint a king or whether the Torah is simply instructing us what to do should the people desire a king. This latter approach can be likened to the laws regarding a divorce. There is certainly no Mitzvah for one to divorce his wife, yet in the event that one would do so, the Torah instructs us on the proper procedure to follow.

I was thinking that one can say that the above dispute has no practical ramification. The nation can survive without the king. Any task he performs can be performed by others. One of the king's roles is to judge, that role can be filled by others as we see in the outset of the Parsha: "Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities" (Devarim 16:18). Another of the king's roles is to decide whether or not to go to war. In reality, at least in the case of a "milchemet reshut", a voluntary war, the king's decision requires the approval of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin, on the other hand, can declare war without the approval of the king. The Ran is of the opinion that the king can mete out punishment for offenses that are not in the Torah - this can also be done by the Sanhedrin certainly when there is no king, perhaps even when there is one. The service in the Beit Hamikdash is performed by the Kohen Gadol and his fellow Kohanim, with perhaps a prophet giving certain specific instructions. In short, any task that the king performs can be done by others, thus his presence in the Jewish nation is not a necessity.

Perhaps those who claim that there is a Mitzvah to appoint a king feel that there is a preference to having one person performing all the required tasks. In actual fact, the king himself does not perform all the tasks. The king does not pave roads or build walls, rather he instructs his servants to do so. The people he instructs will then deputize others to assist them. The king, however, will be the central figure, he will determine whether or not to pave roads, build walls, or anything else.

The king does go out to war, albeit only with the approval of the Sanhedrin.

Having everything emanate from one single source stresses the similarity between this kingdom and the Kingdom of Heaven - there too The King is in full control. The Midrash
tells us that the Jewish kingdom requires "malchuta de-ara ke-ein malchuta derakia" "the kingdom on earth be similar to that in Heaven". Just as Hashem is responsible for everything and takes care of the needs of the people, a human king must take care of all the needs of his people - obviously within the limitations of what any human being is capable of. The king, in short, must serve as an example for how we are to view the kingdom of Heaven.

History has shown the relationship between a kingdom on earth and a Kingdom in Heaven. A country that rids itself of a kingdom for the sake of democracy has usually rid itself of the little religion it may have had. At different times one was the cause and one the effect, the net result however was that when the people did not fear their king, they had no fear of their god either. We see this not only regarding other nations, but it is mentioned in the prophets as well. The prophet tells us: "for we did not fear Hashem, now what shall the king do for us" (Hoshea 10:3). We see clearly that the "we did not fear Hashem" goes hand in hand with "what shall the king do for us".

The king must set an example for how we should view Hashem's Kingdom. Chazal explain that the pasuk "You shall surely set over yourself a king", means "the awe of the king must be upon you" (Sanhedrin 22a). If there were no king, we would have seventy one people to fear and not simply one - in fact we must have fear of all Talmidei Chachamim even those who are not part of the Sanhedrin. There is greater fear of a single person in full control than when the power is spread among seventy or more people. Only when we get used to the idea of fearing one person, can we understand what is meant by fearing Hashem - to totally negate ourselves with respect to His Kingdom.

The king performs many acts of "chesed". The king may decide to appoint someone to an important position or provide him with gifts for no apparent reason. Having a king with the power and desire to perform many acts of "chesed" gets people used to the idea that all the good in this world comes from one central source - Hashem our King.

With this comparison in mind, we must take great care not to overstep its boundaries. Just like Hashem cannot be totally compared to a human king, a human king cannot be made into some deity. There were many times when other nations viewed their king as a god. In fact, during the times of Yoash king of Yehuda, the Jewish people made the same mistake.

Not only should the king not be deified, we must even take great care not to view the Beit Hamikdash as having an intrinsic value. We already know of Yirmiyahu bemoaning this fact when he cried out: "hechal Hashem hechal Hashem hechal Hashem" "The Sanctuary of Hashem, the Sanctuary of Hashem, the Sanctuary of Hashem" (Yirmiyahu 7:4). They did not realize that the holiness of the Beit Hamikdash is only due to it being a venue used for carrying out the wishes of Hashem. As a result of our improper use of them, Hashem took the kingdom and the Beit Hamikdash away from us. The Beit Hamikdash and kingdom, when functioning properly, are supposed to elevate us to a higher level of "yirat Shamayim", fear of Hashem, and "ahavat Shamayim", love of Hashem. One of the ways that we can be brought to a greater level of love of Hashem is by witnessing the many acts of "chesed" the king does for the nation.

During the ceremony of "Hakhel", the king, if one can speak in such terms, takes the place of Hashem. The Torah commands us that once in seven years we must reenact the day the Torah was given, the day referred to in the Torah as the "yom hakahal" "the day of the congregation" (Devarim 18:16). The king, of course, cannot emulate the "thunder and lightning and a heavy cloud" (Shmot 19:16) that was present at Har Sinai - but to the best of our ability we must attempt to reenact those great moments. During "Hakhel", the "chatzotzrot", trumpets, took the place of the other sounds that were present at Har Sinai. As much as possible, "Hakhel" should serve as a reenacting
of the giving of the Torah, rather than hearing the Torah from Hashem, the nation heard it from the king. The king can be viewed as taking Hashem's place on earth. The king has the power to determine life and death - not in all manners of course, but in certain areas such as a punishment for those who are "moreid bemalchut", rebel against the kingdom.

We, who do not have a king, can only imagine what a kingdom must have been in order that we too can relate to the kingdom of Hashem. The kingdom was not the way it is today - a purely ceremonial position whose power does not extend far beyond greeting foreign dignitaries or perhaps pardoning certain offenders. A king in the true sense of the word, is one who has decision-making power. Clearly, Hashem makes all the decisions, but to our eyes this king is doing so. Even a king whose power appears to be unlimited is in fact limited. Firstly, he can only do as much as any human being is capable of doing. Secondly, surrounding countries may have ideas contrary to his and may have enough power to limit his. Thirdly, there are economic and social conditions within his own country that place limits on what he is able to do. The weather also places limitations, we see in Tanach that there is a season for war and a season where war is inappropriate. In short - the king, as unlimited as his power may be, is limited. Hashem's kingdom, on the other hand, has no limitations. As much as a human kingdom can be compared to a heavenly kingdom, we must realize it is only a comparison and cannot be taken to its extreme.

We must work on our own recognition of Hashem's kingdom. We must realize that His power is unlimited and not only can He provide good for us, but desires to do so. We all wish to be healthy and earn a livelihood. We all want health and prosperity for our families and an end to all tragedies such as traffic fatalities. A human king can do his utmost to fight for road safety, Hashem, on the other hand, has the power to prevent road accidents, illnesses, and all other terrible situations. Hashem is the One who can provide for us as well. We must realize that Hashem is the only One we can turn to: "ein lanu Melech ela Ata" "There is no king beside You".

This is our task during the month of Elul, the month whose letters stand for the first letters of "ani ledodi vedodi li" "I am for my beloved and my beloved is for me" (Shir HaShirim 6:3). Our "dodi" desires to become close to us, the only question is how much we wish to become close to Him. During these days we must strengthen our feeling of closeness to Hashem. On the one hand, we must strengthen the feeling of "ahava", love - we must appreciate all the good He has done for us. On the other hand, we must work on our "yira", fear, for we are approaching the day of judgment and He alone determines what the upcoming year will bring - whether there will be road accidents, illnesses, etc. "chas veshalom" or will these all be prevented in the sense of "any of the diseases that I placed upon Egypt, I will not bring upon you, for I am Hashem, your Healer" (Shmot 15:26). Everything depends on Hashem and our job during these days is to work on recognizing this. Hashem is not limited by any internal or external factors, we must realize that we can turn to Him for everything.

A month from now, Hashem will determine what the upcoming year will bring. Our main objective now is to work on becoming closer to Him. Yes, it is true, we must take care of our health and road safety problems as best we can, we must work to earn a living, all with the realizations that this is all superficial, only external. Our requirement to do our part is only as a result of the curse given to Adam Harishon of "by the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread" (Bereishit 3:19), nothing that happens is as a result of what we do - Hashem determines everything and has no need for our assistance! A human king, as much as his powers may appear unlimited, requires the assistance of others. If he has on his agenda to pave roads, he must hire people to do so. If he wishes to fight for safer roads, he requires the assistance of the police or ministry of transport. The King of kings, on the other hand, works totally alone, He alone is the "King Who causes death
and restores life and makes salvation sprout".

Our involvement is a mere facade, Hashem wishes that it not be crystal clear to all that He alone rules. The world seems to run according to the laws of nature, yet these laws of nature are simply a facade. The entire year we must realize that "Hashem Elokenu Hashem Echad" "Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is the One and Only" (Devarim 6:4) - no other power rules. Not only do we affirm this in Kriyat Shma daily, but our Shmone Esrei is filled with many of the things Hashem can do: he is the "chonen hadaat" "gracious Giver of wisdom", the "rotze bitshuva" "Who desires repentance", as well as the one who redeems and heals us. Lest we might think that the one thing we can do on our own is daven, our Shmone Esrei is preceded by "Hashem sfatai tiftach" "Hashem, open my lips" (Tehillim 51:17). We see that we cannot even pray without Hashem's assistance.

It is true that we must work the entire year on recognizing that our wisdom, health, and livelihood come from Hashem and we are simply doing our part. Rosh Hashana, however, is a specific time set aside for this. This is similar to the Mitzvah of remembering the exodus from Egypt. This Mitzvah applies every day of the year, yet it is the night of Pesach that we are specifically commanded to spend the entire night retelling the story and eating Matzah and Marror. The entire year we must view Hashem as our King, Rosh Hashana is the day of the coronation. Rosh Hashana is the day set aside for this because that is the day in which people on earth first began recognizing His kingdom. It may true that "Adon olam asher malach beterem kol yetzir nivra" "Master of the universe Who reigned before any form was created", He was King before and He will always continue to be King: "ve-acharei kichlot hakol levado yimloch nora" "After all has ceased to be, He, the Awesome One, will reign alone". Yet it is also true that "le-et naasa becheftzo kol" "At the time when His will brought all into being" - on the sixth day when man was created then: "azai Melech shmo nikra" "then as 'King' was His Name proclaimed" - there was a man who recognized Hashem's Kingdom.

Hashem did not change, G-d forbid, on that sixth day, rather there were now human beings - Adam and Chava, who recognized His Kingdom. That sixth day, the first Tishrei, was chosen as the day that we annually crown Him as our King. Just as a human king makes an annual celebration on the anniversary of his ascension to the throne, so too we celebrate annually the anniversary of Hashem's becoming our King.

Rosh Hashana is a time for rejoicing. We have our hair cut in honor of Rosh Hashana and we wear special clothes we normally set aside for Shabbat. We must eat festive Yom Tov meals as it says: "Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our L-rd; you shall not grieve for the joy of Hashem is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). On the other hand, we must fear the day of judgment, our rejoicing must be in the sense of "vegilu birada" "rejoice with trembling" (Tehillim 2:11). The Rambam rules that there is a Torah obligation to rejoice on Rosh Hashana but not in excess. We do not recite Hallel on Rosh Hashana. There is a dispute amongst the Rishonim whether or not we recite "vehasienu Hashem Elokenu et birkat moadecha lechayim uleshaloam lesimcha ulesasson" "bestow upon us, O Hashem, our G-d, the blessing of Your appointed festivals for life and for peace, for gladness and for joy" on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Our custom is not to recite it, Rosh Hashana is not a time for abundant rejoicing. The Gemara relates how Hashem Himself states that Rosh Hashana is not a time for extra rejoicing: "The ministering angels said before Hashem, 'why do not the Jewish people sing a song before You on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur?'", "He answered them: 'would it be possible that the King sits on the throne of judgment with the books of those destined to live and destined to die before Him and the people of Israel singing a song before Me'" (Arachin 10b) - we certainly do recite Hallel or display excessive joy.
How is it possible to rejoice and fear at the same time? The answer is that on the one hand, we are rejoicing at the fact that we are crowning Hashem as our King. In fact, one of the reasons given for the Mitzvah of blowing the shofar is that it is similar to the way a human king is crowned, accompanied by trumpets. The Kingdom is not complete, the Beit Hamikdash - Hashem's palace where "bachatzotzrot vekol shofar hariu lifnei haMelech Hashem" "with trumpets and the shofar sound, call out before the King, Hashem" (Tehillim 98:6) is missing. Even though today we do not have the sounds of the "chatzotzrot", only the shofar, nevertheless we still rejoice at having Hashem as our King. We daven that we should merit having the Kingdom of Hashem "behar Tzion mishkan kevodecha uviYerushalayim ir ko dshecha" "on Mount Zion, resting place of Your glory; and in Jerusalem, Your holy city", that His Kingdom should extend over the entire universe: "meloch al kol haolam kulo bichvodecha" "reign over the entire universe in Your glory".

We do not make any personal requests, such as for livelihood, on Rosh Hashana. We mention in passing "besefer chayim bracha veshalom uparanasa tova" "In the book of life, blessing, and peace, and good livelihood" yet in the body of the Shmone Esrei itself the only request we make is that Hashem be our King. The third bracha contains requests such as: "uvchen ten pachdecha Hashem Elokenu" "And so, too, O Hashem, our G-d, instill Your awe upon all Your works", "uvchen ten kavod Hashem le-amecha" "And so, too, O Hashem, grant honor to Your people", and "veyeda kol paul ki ata pe-alto" "Let everything that has been made know that You are its Maker.

As individuals, on the other hand, we must worry about the type of year we will be written and inscribed for. The Jewish nation as a whole is certainly written in the book of life. Even during the difficult and dark years of the Holocaust and the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, the nation was written for a year of life. Who knows what type of year an individual will be inscribed for? Will there be terrible decrees of road accidents and bombings that should never take place and, G-d forbid, may involve an individual or family members? This is how it is possible for the "vegilu", to go hand in hand with the "birada". On Rosh Hashana our task is to rejoice at having Hashem as our King, and to be in fear and trepidation of how we will pass the Day of Judgment. We must therefore rejoice with festive meals and clothing, but this rejoicing must be accompanied by fear. One who does not fear the judgment and one who does not rejoice is lacking in his acceptance of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Gemara mentions a halacha that "We do not conclude a blessing with two subjects" (Brachot 49a), we do not mention two ideas in the conclusion of a bracha. How is it then that on Rosh Hashana we recite the blessing whose conclusion is "melech al kol haaretz mekadesh Yisrael veYom haZikaron" "King over all the world, Who sanctifies Israel and the Day of Remembrance". Are not the Kingdom of Hashem and the sanctification of the day two ideas that should therefore not be mentioned in the concluding sentence of the same blessing? The answer is that these two ideas are not merely two concepts that therefore should not be mentioned in the conclusion of the same bracha. Hashem's being King over all the world is what the day itself is all about. Thus, we cannot view this as something we are blessing Hashem for, rather it is the nature of the entire day of Rosh Hashana.

The Ten days of Tshuva begin with Rosh Hashana and culminate with Yom Kippur. Strangely enough, on Rosh Hashana we do not recite the viduy, confession, or make mention of any sins. We do not even eat nuts because the numerical value of "egoz", meaning nut, is equivalent to that of "chet", sin, after the "aleph" is removed. Should not the days of repentance be filled with asking for forgiveness for our sins? Some Rabbis of the Mussar Movement did not give mussar on Rosh Hashana lest they make mention of any sins or shortcomings. Rosh Hashana is not a time for speaking of sins. Even those places where they are accustomed to having "drashot", great heed is taken
not to mention any sins.

Despite this, Rosh Hashana is the beginning of the ten days of Tshuva and we must begin working on righting our wrongs. The start, the foundation, of repentance is not by enumerating sins but rather by recognizing that Hashem is King and rules the world according to His will, there is no other power. Anything that goes against His will is a worthless pursuit. Only by firmly establishing this can we arrive at Yom Kippur and be able to say with a full heart "velo shava lanu" "it was to no avail", to realize that all the sins were worthless. We should not be thinking that we ate something not kosher and it was delicious, that we spoke lashon hara and it was not so terrible! The only way to truly feel that our sins were worthless is to have Rosh Hashana precede Yom Kippur - only by clearly acknowledging the Kingdom of Heaven and by recognizing that any attempt to go against Hashem's will is futile can we reach a state of total repentance!

Hoshea turns to us and beseeches: "shuva Yisrael ad Hashem Elokecha ki chashalta baavonecha" "Return, O Israel to Hashem, your G-d, for you have stumbled through your iniquity" (Hoshea 14:2). Although we must repent for any laxity in all six hundred thirteen Mitzvot, repentance begins with the realization that "Ashur lo yoshienu" "Ashur shall not save us" (ibid. 4), no other powers in the world can save us - not Ashur, not America, and not even the IDF! "Al sus lo nirkav" "we will not ride the horse"(ibid.) one can call it a horse, a missile, or anything else, it cannot be of any help, it is only Hashem who can help us. It is true that we need to use tanks, missiles, or other forms of assistance, but that is a separate issue - that is simply a result of the curse given to Adam Harishon. The missile is not what really helps us emerge victorious, only belief in Hashem can accomplish this. "Sheker hasus litshua" "a sham is the horse for salvation", it is not a half truth, a quarter truth, or even an example of "ze veze gorem" "this and this cause". It is a complete falsehood! Hashem may have decreed it as a necessary way to run the world, we must realize, however, that it only appears to accomplish something. "Sheker hasus litshua uvrov chelo lo yemalet" "sham is the horse for salvation; despite its great strength it provides no escape" (Tehillim 33:17), what will provide an escape? Only "hinei ein Hashem el yere-av ve-el hamayachalim lechasdo" "Behold, the eye of Hashem is on those who fear Him, upon those who await His kindness" (ibid. 18), this is the only thing that can save us.

During these days we must also strive to cleave to the attributes of Hashem. Hashem is "rav chesed" "abundant in kindness". We must spend our time involved in acts of chesed. Since we are unable to leave the Yeshiva to engage in acts of chesed on the streets, we must attempt as best we can to be "rav chesed" among each other. We must bring the weaker students and new students closer to us. Chazal tell us: "it is better to show one's white teeth (by smiling affectionately) to his friend than to give him a glass of milk" (Ketubot 111b). Although a smile costs less money than the glass of milk - leading one to believe that perhaps it has less significance, a glass of milk can only sustain someone for a day or two whereas a smile can have a lasting effect. Being greeted "besever panim yafot" "with a cheerful countenance" (Pirkei Avot 1:15) can leave an everlasting impression. One who feels good about being in the Yeshiva will be more likely to send his children to a Yeshiva.

We must make special effort to welcome and honor those who have arrived from overseas. These students have left the land of the "sus" and "Ashur" and came to Israel to study Torah, they are certainly deserving of our respect. It is entirely possible to be a "rav chesed" without ever leaving the walls of the Yeshiva! As Hashem does, we must strive to be "maavir al midotav" "forgive iniquities" (Rosh Hashana 17a). If I was hurt by another I should try as best to forgive and forget. Chazal tell us: "mi kel kamocha nosei avon veover al pesah - lemi nosei avon? lemi sheover al pesha" "Who is like you Hashem forgiving iniquity and passing by transgression, who is forgiven iniquity? One who passes by transgression" (Rosh Hashana 17a). We await Hashem's forgiving us in order that we too shall be "nosei avon" and "ovrim al pesha".
Hashem is not by any means one who is a "vatran" - one who absolves His people of their sin, we are told the contrary: "kol haomer HaKadosh Baruch Hu vatran hu, yivatru chayav" "whoever says Hashem is lax in the execution of justice, his life shall be outlawed" (Baba Kamma 50a). The result, however, of an individual being a "vatran" is that the judgment is "mevater" to him, a form of "mida keneged mida" "measure for measure" (Shabbat 105b), for we know that "all the measures of Hashem are measure for measure" (Sanhedrin 90a). As we said "who is forgiven for their iniquity? one who passes by transgression." The Gr"a's version of the text is "lemi over al pesha? lemi shenosei avon" - there is no major practical difference.

Someone recently told me that every night before he goes to sleep he forgives everyone who may have wronged him with the exception of one person. I would not recommend doing such a thing. How would we feel if Hashem would say: "venislach lechol adat Bnei Yisrael" "and it shall be forgiven to the entire assembly of Israel" (Bamidbar 15:26), that is the entire Jewish nation with one exception? What if one of us was that exception? Although it does say that one need not absolve another of his obligation to return a debt, when it comes to one who has hurt you it is better to forgive. At the end of one hundred twenty years nothing remains of it, it is all "havel havalim" "futility of futilities" (Kohelet 1:2), anyway.

While we must repent and perhaps spend more time in Mussar, we must also strengthen ourselves in the area of learning. The only way we can ask Hashem to listen to us is if we do as He wishes. Hashem speaks to us via the Torah, we speak to Him via our davening. The only way we can know what He wants from us is to study the Torah.

In Yeshivot it is customary to emphasize, among other things, the laws of nezikin - such as found in Massechet Baba Kama, this provides us with an opportunity we did not have in the previous zman. The Gemara tells us: "One who wishes to become wise, let him deal with civil law" (Mishna Baba Bathra 10:8). You may ask why not spend time on more practical issues such as the laws of Shabbat - certainly of primary importance but it does not offer the same opportunity for us to gain an understanding of the deep wisdom behind the laws of the Torah. Other areas of the Torah, such as the laws of Shabbat, involve arriving at an understanding of the halacha based on what is written in the psukim and what is derived from them - we follow certain laws because that is what Hashem decreed. The study of monetary laws, on the other hand, allows us to gain insight into the logic, "sevarot". Clearly Arba Avot Nezikin (the first perek in Baba Kama) is based on psukim in the Chumash, but we also have the opportunity to see the logic behind many of the halachot. Whereas the study of other areas helps one gain general knowledge, certainly very important, the study of monetary laws helps one develop his own independence in learning, in understanding what exactly it is that Hashem said.

One of the concluding psukim in the Torah is "velo kam navi od beYisrael keMoshe" "Never again has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moshe" (Devarim 34:10). There is nothing to talk about, who could possibly be like Moshe - the loyal servant, the prophet, the loyal leader who wrought plagues upon the Egyptians and brought the Torah down from Har Sinai. The Torah concludes with "and by all the strong hand and awesome power that Moshe performed before the eyes of all Israel" (ibid. 12). Chazal tell us that this refers to his breaking of the tablets. Why is this of such importance? Should the Torah rather not have emphasized that he brought the tablets to us, or took us out of Egypt?

The answer is that whatever else Moshe did was an act of the loyal servant following his Master's dictates. If Hashem decreed that there should be various plagues, Moshe did his part. Hashem instructed Moshe: "ascend to Me to the mountain" (Devarim 10:1), and he did so. Breaking the tablets, on the other hand, was Moshe's own decision.
Although this is actually what Hashem wanted - this was not clear at the outset. It would appear on the surface that what Moshe did was wrong for if Hashem gave Moshe the tablets to bring to the nation, Moshe had no right to decide to take them away. This is where we see Moshe's greatness, his understanding of matters based on his own logic.

The study of monetary laws provides us with a way of gaining such wisdom. We certainly cannot compete with Moshe, and we should not for a second think that we have any right to break any tablets - even if we did we would have no way of bringing new ones. We must, however, develop our own independent way of thinking and understanding. We must develop the potential for greatness within us. This is what the Yeshiva is here to assist us in doing.

During these days we must daven that there be good decrees for the nation. We must pray that the land of Israel remain in Jewish hands. It is not sufficient that it simply remain in Jewish hands, it must be a land where the Shabbat is not desecrated and there is an end to the apostate system of education. In these two areas specifically the situation is terrible and it is only getting worse. We must therefore daven that the land be in Jewish hands with Torah being observed in it. The land of Israel cannot survive otherwise.

The Torah testifies that if we do not observe the Torah in our land, the land will spit us out. We see this happening before our very eyes! Call it whatever percent pullback you wish, the bottom line is that the land is spitting us out. In previous years we only read in the Torah "Let not the land disgorge you" (Vayikra 18:28) - today we witness its fulfillment. The only way to prevent the land from spitting us out further, is to observe the Torah.

We must daven that the nation observe the Torah, that there will be Shabbat observance, and only religious education. We must pray that the holy Yeshivot be strengthened, and learning in general be strengthened in Israel. It is only then that we can merit a "ketiva vachatima tova", for us and our brethren in the Jewish nation. Amen.

**View Parsha Archives for Parshat Shoftim**

**Kollel Rennert Dvar Torah by HaRav Yosef Korkus**

**THE KING'S ROLE**

One of the mitzvoth discussed in our parsha is that of appointing a king: "when you shall come to the Land that Hashem, your G-d gives you, and possess it, and settle in it, and you will say: 'I will set a king over myself, like all the nations that are around me. You shall surely set over yourself a king whom Hashem, your G-d shall choose ..." (Devarim 17:14-15).

The commandment to appoint a king is vital and necessary for leading the people. However the Torah's commandment to choose a king, and the way in which the king leads the nation appear at first glance to be a bit difficult to understand. The Torah commands us: "you shall surely set over yourself a king whom Hashem, your G-d shall choose".

Why does the Torah not take into account the will of the people, why must the king be divinely chosen? Furthermore, the Torah commands us: "only he shall not have too many horses for himself ... and he shall not have too many wives ...and he shall not greatly increase silver and gold for himself" (ibid. 16-17). The entire strength of a king
is in his army, treasures, many wives and children. If so, why does the Torah take away from his strength when this is something vital for leading the nation?

An answer to these questions can be found in the words of the prophet Shmuel. We read: "all the elders of Israel then gathered together and came to Shmuel, to Ramah" (Shmuel I 8:4). The elders approached him and asked for a king to rule over them: '... appoint for us a king to judge us, like the nations'" (ibid. 5). Shmuel is not happy with the request: "it was wrong in Shmuel's eyes that they said: 'give us a king to judge us" (ibid. 6). Shmuel prayed to Hashem at which point we read: "Hashem said to Shmuel: 'listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for it is not you whom they have rejected but it is Me whom they have rejected from reigning over them" (ibid. 7).

We see that Hashem as well as Shmuel are not happy with the request of the elders at which point Hashem commands Shmuel: "and now, heed their voice but be sure to warn them and them about the protocol of the king who will reign over them" (ibid. 9).

Shmuel describes and details by elaborating the kingdom to the nation. Shmuel explains to them how he the king would be able to rule over them and how he could theoretically take advantage of the people. Shmuel concludes his words with: "on that day you will cry out because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but Hashem will not answer you on that day" (ibid. 17).

However, the king is supposed to save the people and work for their good. The king is endowed with great power, however, the king's power can potentially be very destructive for the nation. The Torah therefore limited the way in which the king is chosen and his power in order to produce the greatest possible good for the people and in order to prevent having a king who would bring harm to the nation.

The Torah forbade the king from having too many horses, too many wives, and to amass too much gold and silver. On the other hand the king is commanded to write two Sifrei Torah, one will remain in his treasures while the other one will always remain in his midst. The king is commanded to always use the Sefer Torah: "It shall be that when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah in a book ... it shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life, so that he will learn to fear Hashem his G-d, to observe all the words of this Torah and these decrees, to perform them." (ibid. 18-19).

In this command the Torah is emphasizing to the king: do not rely on your wealth, the power of your horses, or your own strength, rather focus your eyes and your heart to Hashem Who is the source of strength and authority. You must understand that you were given the throne in order that you "observe the words of this Torah and these decrees, to perform them." The Torah writes that the king should not have too many horses lest he return the people to Egypt. The Torah here wishes to make sure that the king does not return them to the spiritual state they were in prior to having left Egypt when they were immersed in the vanities of this world. Should the king think that victory depends on his having many horses and chariots then it is as if he has brought the nation back to Egypt. Chazal relate regarding kings who acted contrary to the ways of the Torah. The following is one of Chazal's description regarding a king who relied on his own strength without recognizing the power of the Torah and its sages. Chazal relate the following incident involving King Yannai who was from the Hasmonean dynasty and ruled during the period of the second Beit HaMikdash.

"It happened that King Yannai went to Kochalit in the desert and there he conquered sixty cities. Upon his return, he was exceedingly happy and he arranged a celebration to which he called all the Sages of Israel. He said to them: 'our forefathers ate a type of herb called meluchim when they were involved in building the second Beit HaMikdash. Let us also eat meluchim in remembrance of our forefathers. They served melucim on tables of gold and they feasted." (Kiddushin 66a).
What Yannai suggested was that just as their ancestors involved in the building of the second Beit HaMikdash ate meluchim while involved in the work, because they were very poor. Their being poor did not stop them from carrying out the building of the Beit HaMikdash. King Yannai suggested serving herbs as thanks to Hashem for having brought them success and wealth.

The Gemara continues: "A certain peson was there, a scoffer, a man of wicked and lawless heart, and Elazar ben Po'rah was his name. Elazar ben Po'rah said to King Yannai: 'King Yannai, the hearts of the Perushim are upon you (i.e. the sages hate you and are not overjoyed with your success). King Yannai replied: "and what shall I do?". Elazar ben Po'rah responded: 'cause them to rise by placing the tzitz between your eyes' - place the tzitz which should rightfully be worn only by the Kohen Gadol, on your forehead, and the sages will stand up because the Name of Hashem is written there - you will immediately see what they think of you.

"There was a certain elder there whose name was Yehudah ben Gedidyah and Yehudah ben Gedidyah said to King Yannai: 'King Yannai! Be satisfied with the crown of kingship, leave the crown of Kehuna for the descendants of Aharon.' The reason he challenged Yannai's fitness to be a Kohen was because people had said that Yannai's mother was once captured by idolaters in the town of Modi'im before Yannai was born. If she was in fact captured, Yannai would have been unfit to serve as a Kohen. Nevertheless the matter was investigated and no evidence was found to substantiate the report, in any case, Yannai angrily removed the Sages of Israel from the feast.

"Then Elazar ben Po'rah said to King Yannai: 'King Yannai, if an ordinary Jew were treated in this way it would be his lot to submit to this indignity. But you are a king and now the Kohen Gadol, is this your lot?' King Yannai replied: 'but what then shall I do?' Elazar responded: 'if you listen to my advice, kill these sages who have dishonored you.' Yannai replied: 'but the Torah, what will be with it?' Elazar responded: 'behold, the Torah scroll is rolled, and it rests in the corner. Anyone who wishes to study it, let him come and study.'

"Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak said: at that moment, heretical ideas were cast into the mind of Yannai for Yannai should have replied, this answer is satisfactory for the Written Torah, but what of the Oral Torah? How will it be perpetuated?

"Immediately thereafter the evil burst forth on account of Elazar ben Po'rah, and Yannai executed all the Sages of Israel, and the world was bereft of Torah knowledge until Shimon ben Shetach (brother of Yannai's wife) ame and returned the Torah to its former standing - by teaching them the Torah and training new Sages."

Here we see an example of what happens when a king against the commandments of the Torah and is not subservient to the Torah and its sages.

Visitor Log, Mazal Tov's, Tehillim List

Visitor Log

The following people visited/learned in the Yeshiva:

- Jonathan Del Monte (5768-69)
- Sam Fromson (5768-69)

Mazal Tov

Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh wishes a Mazal Tov to:
- Jonathan Klayman (5766) on his marriage to Nurit Krieger.
- Zev Herskovits (5767) on his marriage to Enny Kadoch.
- Nat (Natanel, 5759-61) and Beth Lipschitz on the birth of a baby girl, Eva Tess.
- Uri and Dena Schneider and their family on their aliyah to Eretz Yisroel.
- Michael Shapiro (5767) on his marriage to Cara Stamler.
- Dina and Rav Yerachmiel Roness on the birth of a grandson, son to Rav Zev & Tehilla Roness.

**Baruch Dayan Emet**

Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh regrets to inform you of the passing of:

- The paternal grandfather of Judah Spector (5769-70) and Max Spector (5770-71).

The following members of our extended YNA family need our tefilot:

- Ditza bat Vardit
- Zev Eliezer ben Chaya Shaindel
- Chaya bat Grunia
- Yitzchok ben Shayna Ita
- Moshe Zanvel ben Brindel
- Gershon Yitzchok ben Mottel Tzerel
- Reuven ben Tova Chaya
- Rivka Margalit bat Etta
- Chaya Meira Mindel bas Chava Golda
- Sarah Nechama bas Russ Malka
- Chaya Sarah bat Fanya Luna
- Elazar ben Nouber
- Na'ava Bat Ami bat Sara Leah
- Gilad ben Aviva
- Edmund ben Nazir
- Devorah Leah bat Hindel
- Avram Gershon ben Tzippah
- Sarah Nechama bas Russ Malka
- Dovid ben Miriam
- Evelyn Bat Dina
- Rafael Pinchas ben Esther
- Avraham Pinchas ben Sarah Etel
- Avraham David ben Miriam Goldeh
- Ephraim Yitzchak ben Golda
- Margalit bat Rachel
- Yaacov ben Baila
- Chaya Tziporah Sheva bat Faiga
- Ester Bas Lea
- Miriam Rivka bat Adina Leah
- Chaya Esther bat Golda Rachel
- Shayna bas Chava
- Eliezer ben Sorah
- Fruma bat Rochel
- Yonatan Moshe ben Devorah Tova
- Naomi Sara bas Henna Miriam
- Fruma bas Ita
- Tinok ben Esther Sharon
- Leah Bat Rivkah
- Zacharia Kalman ben Yael Margolit
- Eliezer ben Sorah
- Shmuel Chai Ben Hadassa
- David Yosef ben Faige Perel
- Tsilah Blimah bas Tsipporah
- Tuvia ben Yachad

[Printer Friendly Tehillim List]
And of course we are always davening for the safe return of Gilad Shalit (Gilad ben Aviva)

Submit Names to the list.

Send Us Your Announcements

Please, if you have any smachot or chas v'shalom, less happy occasions, let our office know so we can keep everybody updated. Are you visiting Israel? - let us know! We'd love to host you for a shabbat meal, davening, a shiur and would love for you to stop by.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Bina, Netiv Aryeh
Yeshivat Netiv Aryeh

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