



TORONTO TORAH

נצבים-וילך NITZAVIM-VAYELECH

23 Elul 5786

September 5, 2026



Candlelighting | 7:30 PM

Havdallah | 8:36 PM (50 minutes after שקיעה)

What Will Be Their Hakhel?

RABBI YEHUDA MANN | דבר תורה

Rosh Beit Midrash



Parshas Vayeilech is the shortest parsha in the Torah—just thirty pesukim. Yet remarkably, it contains two of the Torah's final mitzvos: **Hakhel** and writing a Sefer Torah. Perhaps that itself carries a message. As the Torah approaches its conclusion, it turns our attention to one crucial question: **How will Torah continue into the next generation?**

The Gemara in Chagigah relates that Rabbi Yehoshua once asked his students what chiddush had been taught that day in the Beis Midrash. They shared Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah's explanation of Hakhel:

"Gather the people—the men, the women, and the children."

The men came to learn. The women came to listen. But why bring the small children?

"Kedei litein sachar l'mevi'eihem" — to give reward to those who bring them.

The Gemara describes that Rabbi Yehoshua was overwhelmed by this chiddush: **"You had such a precious pearl, and you wanted to keep it from me?!"**

The **Ben Yehoyada** explains something profound: perhaps the children will not understand the words—but they will absorb the **experience**.

A child sees his father learning with excitement. He watches his mother davening with emotion. He sees thousands of Jews gathering around Torah with reverence and joy. He may not understand what anyone is saying, but something enters his neshamah.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik beautifully described this from his own childhood. His father, Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, would give shiurim in the room where young Yosef Dov slept. The child understood virtually nothing, but he watched his father struggle with a difficult Rambam, defend the Rambam from the Raavad, and rejoice when the sugya finally became clear.

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KIDS CORNER



PARSHAT TRIVIA

- 1 Why will Eretz Yisrael become desolate?
- 2 How does the Torah describe from where we will return?
- 3 What did Moshe tell the nation?
- 4 To whom did Moshe give the complete Torah scroll?
- 5 Where did they put the completed Torah Scroll?

ANSWERS

- 1 Because Bnei Yisrael abandoned their covenant with Hashem and worshipped other gods.
- 2 "Even from the ends of the heavens."
- 3 Moshe told Bnei Yisrael to be steadfast and strong.
- 4 Moshe was 120 years old when he spoke to the nation.
- 5 Moshe gave it to the Levim who carried the Aron.

Continued on page 3

Redemption & Repentance: A Gradual Process

RABBI AMI YUNGER | מחשבה



The Torah's description of redemption in Parashat Nitzavim begins with Am Yisrael returning to God:

“וְשָׁבַת עַד ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּשְׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹל”
 “You will return to Hashem your God and listen to His voice”
 (Devarim 30:2).

Only afterward does the Torah describe the redemption itself:

“וְשָׁבַת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת שְׁבוּתְךָ וְרַחֲמֶךָ, וְשָׁב וְקִבְּצָךְ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים”
 “Hashem your God will return your captivity and have mercy upon you, and He will gather you from all the nations” (30:3).

At first glance, the sequence appears straightforward: Am Yisrael repents, and the redemption follows. Yet the continuation of the passage is more complex. After describing the ingathering of the exiles and the return to Eretz Yisrael, the Torah speaks of another spiritual transformation:

“וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶת לְבָבְךָ וְאֶת לֵב בְּנֶיךָ, לֵאמֹר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ”
 “Hashem your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love Hashem your God” (30:6).

The Torah then describes yet another return: “וְאַתָּה תָּשׁוּב וּשְׁמַעְתָּ” – “You will return and listen to the voice of Hashem” (30:8). Why does repentance appear repeatedly, both before and after redemption?

Rabbi Yitzchak Arama explains in the Akeidat Yitzchak that these verses describe an alternating process. An initial return to God is followed by a stage of redemption. That redemption enables a deeper return, which brings further blessing and renewal. This, in turn, leads to an even stronger and more complete repentance: “כִּי תָשׁוּב אֶל ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ” – “For you will return to Hashem your God with all your heart and all your soul” (30:10).

Rav Chaim Druckman emphasizes that redemption and repentance are therefore not separate events governed by a simple condition: first complete repentance, then complete redemption. They develop together. Each stage of national restoration creates the conditions for greater spiritual renewal, while each spiritual advance allows the redemptive process to progress further.

Like redemption itself, the return of Am Yisrael unfolds קָמַעַת קָמַעַת—gradually, stage by stage. Physical return and spiritual return strengthen one another until both reach their fullness.



PRE-SELICHOT SHIUR

United We Stand: The Benefits of Communal Confession

with Rabbi Ezer Dina

MAGGID SHIUR BEIT MIDRASH ZICHRON DOV
 & SENIOR RAM BNEI AKIVA SCHOOLS

11:15 PM | Shaarei Tefillah | 3600 Bathurst

Followed by **SELICHOT**

MOTZAI SHABBAT, SEPTEMBER 5 | 12:00 MIDNIGHT

Soul at Work: Deepening Our Tefillah

RABBI ORI IDELS | תפילה



Chapter 1: The Soul Is Always Praying

Sometimes I walk into shul and feel like the tefillah is purely mechanical. The familiar words roll off my tongue, but my heart isn't in them at all. Is this really how it's supposed to be? Is there a way to change that?

I truly believe there is. I've had good tefillot—prayers straight from the heart where I felt that HaKadosh Baruch Hu was the only One who could truly save me. That deep experience made me realize that if I touched that place once, I can probably get back there again. I invite you to join my weekly journey where we explore a fresh insight into tefillah each time, working together to uncover a path toward genuinely meaningful prayer.

To build a deeper connection, we first need to understand where the need to daven even comes from. Let's start at the foundation: the Torah source for the mitzvah of tefillah is a major machloket among the Rishonim. The Rambam[1] follows the Midrash on “U'le'ovdo b'chol levavchem”—“Which is the avodah of the heart? This is tefillah.” This implies a daily d'Oraita obligation to daven to Hashem. The Ramban[2] holds that the d'Oraita mitzvah applies only during an *et tzarah* (a time of distress), while daily prayer is a *midat chasidut* established d'Rabbanan.

Two key principles, however, are universally agreed upon:

1. Chazal established the fixed number and times of the daily tefillot.
2. During an *et tzarah*, there is an undisputed d'Oraita mitzvah to cry out to Hashem.

Anyone who has lived through an *et tzarah* (and sadly, I experienced real *sakkanat nefashot* during the current war) knows that no one needs to command you to daven. Calling out to Shamayim for help is pure human instinct.

The fact that a person instinctively reaches out to Hashem in an *et tzarah* proves that deep down, we know our very existence rests entirely in His hands. An *et tzarah* is an extreme moment, but the reality is that we depend on Hashem every single second of our lives—we just don't fully feel it during the quiet times.

Self-Work for the Coming Week:

Think back to a moment when you felt total helplessness and absolute dependence on Hashem. Try to take the memory of that raw vulnerability and bring it into one ordinary moment during your routine day—recognizing that our quiet stability depends on Hashem every single second. The *neshama* is fully aware of this and is constantly praying; sometimes, you can actually feel it in your heart.

Hatzlacha!

For thoughts, comments, and feedback: ori.idels2@gmail.com

[1] Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvot, Aseh 5.

[2] Ramban, Hassagot to Sefer HaMitzvot, Aseh 5.

What Will Be Their Hakhel?

(continued from page 1)

When his father resolved the difficulty, young Yosef Dov would run excitedly to his mother: **"Mama! The Rambam was right! He defeated the Raavad! Father helped him!"**

One night, however, his father could not resolve the question. The boy ran to his mother disappointed: "The Rambam lost! Daddy wasn't successful!"

His mother responded with unforgettable words: **"Daddy wasn't successful—but perhaps you will be."**

And she was right.

Years later, Rav Soloveitchik became one of the great Torah scholars of his generation. The Rambam, Rashi, Rabbeinu Tam, and the Raavad had become living personalities in his world. Those childhood experiences never left him.

Perhaps this explains why **Rabbi Yehoshua** was so moved by the teaching of Hakhel.

Pirkei Avos describes him with the extraordinary words, "Ashrei yoladeto" — fortunate is the woman who gave birth to him. Chazal explain that his mother would bring his cradle into the Beis Midrash so that, from infancy, his ears would absorb words of Torah.

Rabbi Yehoshua understood Hakhel personally. And that leaves us with an enormous responsibility: What are our children absorbing?

They may not understand every word of a shiur or every part of davening—but they notice whether Torah is alive to us. They see whether we learn with excitement, daven with feeling, and participate in a community filled with Torah and chesed.

And they absorb the opposite as well: the talking during davening, the noise during Krias HaTorah, and the message that the kiddush outside is more exciting than the haftorah inside.

The Torah's final mitzvos remind us that if Torah is to continue, we must give the next generation experiences that make them want to be part of it.

Take them to the Maple Leafs game—but take them to the Siyum HaShas too. Take them to Wonderland—but let them also experience chesed, heartfelt tefillah, and a Beis Midrash alive with Torah.

They may not remember everything they heard. **But they will remember what they felt.**

So perhaps the question every parent, grandparent, rebbe, teacher, and community must ask is:

What will be our children's Hakhel?

What memories of Yiddishkeit are we creating for them?

And most importantly: **What will remain in their neshamah long after they leave the room?**

From Personal Teshuva to the Returning of the Shechinah

RABBI ORI EZRA | ארץ ישראל



During the month of Elul, we enter a period of introspection, repentance, and seeking forgiveness. In the Selichot, there is a significant spiritual process. After reciting the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy and the personal confession, we say the confession beginning "אשמונו, בגדנו". As we continue, the confession moves from the individual to the situation of the Jewish people as a whole:

"אשמונו מכל עם" - "We are guilty more than any nation", "בבול" — "Our Temple is destroyed because of our sins," and "טירתנו היתה לשמה" — "Our dwelling has become desolate."

At first glance, what does this have to do with the personal repentance of Elul? We are focused on correcting ourselves, teshuva, improving our character, regretting the past, and accepting the future. Why, immediately afterward, do we begin to mourn the destruction of the Temple, Jerusalem, and the exile of the Shechinah?

We internalize that this is not a transition to a different subject, but one continuous process.

Elul indeed begins with the teshuva of the individual. A person stands before Hashem and seeks to correct what needs correction. But genuine repentance cannot remain confined to the individual. As a person corrects himself, he should begin to recognize that the greater deficiency is not only what is missing in his own life, but what is missing from all of us.

We individually begin to feel the absence of Jerusalem and the Temple. We realize that the destruction of the Temple is not merely

a historical event, but a reality that remains incomplete today, with the exile of the Shechinah itself.

This idea takes on special significance as we approach Rosh Hashanah. After a month devoted to repentance, confession, and seeking mercy, the Zohar warns us against turning prayer entirely toward our own needs:

בריש כל שתא ושתא אינון צווחין: הב לן חיי, הב לן מזונא... ככלבין
"דמצוחין דאינון מצוחין אלא לגרמייהו"

"Every year, at its beginning, they cry out: Give us life, give us sustenance... like dogs that cry out only for themselves."
(תיקוני הזוהר, תיקון ו', דף כ"ב ע"א)

The Zohar is not criticizing the desire for life, sustenance, or forgiveness. The problem is when a person remains trapped within himself, and his entire prayer revolves around what he personally lacks, without longing for the Shechinah, Jerusalem, the Temple, and the redemption of Israel.

This is the process that Elul is meant to awaken: repentance begins with "I," but its purpose is "we." From the individual to Klal Yisrael, from correcting our character toward Ahavat Yisrael, and from personal repentance to a deep longing for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the return of the Shechinah to its place.

May we merit a complete teshuva, one that transforms us personally and opens our hearts to the pain of the Shechinah, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the complete geula of our people.

Who Gets to Blow the Shofar This Year?

RABBI YEHUDA MANN | הלכה



Question: Our shul has two regular baalei toke'a: Reuven blows on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, and Shimon on the second. This year, however, the first day falls on Shabbat, when we do not blow shofar. So who blows on Sunday? Shimon, who has a chazakah on the second day—or Reuven, whose chazakah may be to blow **first**?

Answer: The poskim recognize the concept of chazakah in mitzvot. Someone who regularly serves as chazzan or baal toke'a may acquire a recognized claim to that position.

But our unusual calendar raises a fascinating question: **What exactly is Reuven's chazakah?**

Is his position specifically to blow **on the first day** of Rosh Hashanah? If so, this year he simply has no opportunity to exercise that chazakah, and Shimon should blow on the second day as usual.

Or perhaps Reuven's chazakah is to be the first baal toke'a? If so, since Sunday is the first time shofar is blown this year, Reuven should blow.

The poskim actually debate this question.

The **Panim Me'iroi** (II:126) rules that Reuven should blow. He compares this to certain piyutim traditionally designated for the first day of Sukkot. When the first day falls on Shabbat, those piyutim are instead recited on the second day. Apparently, the designation is not tied specifically to the calendar date, but to being **first in the sequence**. The same, he argues, applies to our baal toke'a.

The **Sha'arei Teshuvah** (581), however, disagrees. He argues that the cases cannot be compared. Regarding piyutim, Chazal established an order of recitation. But a chazakah should be viewed more like a proprietary right: Reuven has his day, and Shimon has his.

Imagine Reuven owns Apartment 1 and Shimon owns Apartment 2. If Reuven's apartment floods, does that give him the right to move into Shimon's apartment? Of course not! Reuven's unfortunate circumstances do not take away Shimon's rights.

Accordingly, the Sha'arei Teshuvah rules that **Shimon should blow on the second day**.

The **Aruch HaShulchan** writes that the accepted custom follows the Panim Me'iroi. I also discussed this question with **Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon**, who suggested that, since there are significant opinions on both sides, the ideal solution may be compromise. Particularly when the same calendar arrangement will occur again the following year, one baal toke'a can blow this year and the other the next.

I am proud to say that this very question arose in my own shul—and indeed, the two baalei toke'a argued over who should blow.

But their argument was the exact opposite of what one might expect—**Each one insisted that the other should have the zechut!**

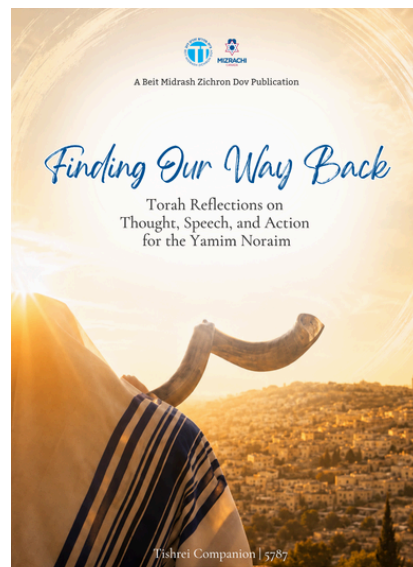
Perhaps that is the most important halacha of all. We put tremendous effort into finding the finest shofar and the most qualified baal toke'a. But one of the greatest things that can carry our tefillot upward on Rosh Hashanah is something even more precious:

Shalom, achdut, and the willingness to give way for another Jew.

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Upcoming Events



Tishrei
IN A
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Breakfast

Monday, September 7

| 9:45 AM |

BAIT

613 Clark Ave. W

Tishrei
IN A
NIGHT

Tuesday, September 8

| 8:00 PM |

Shaarei Shomayim

470 Glencairn Ave.

YOUR BEIT MIDRASH

Rosh Beit Midrash

Rabbi Yehuda Mann | ymann@torontotorah.com

Maggidei Shiur

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