



# Daf Hashavua

28 September 2019  
Shabbat ends

28 Elul 5779  
London 7.32pm  
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## Nitzavim נְצַבִּים

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In loving memory of Ephraim Mordechai ben Ze'ev



“Then the Lord, your God... will return and gather you in from all the peoples to which the Lord, your God, has scattered you... The Lord, your God, will bring you to the Land that your forefathers possessed and you shall possess it” (Devarim 30:3-5).

# Sidrah Summary: Nitzavim

## 1st Aliya (Kohen) – Devarim 29:9-11

On the last day of his life, Moshe gathers every member of the nation, from the heads of the tribes and the elders to the very young children.

## 2nd Aliya (Levi) – 29:12-14

Moshe enters them into a covenant with God, that they will be “a people to Him and He will be a God to them”, which He promised to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. This covenant will be binding for future generations.

## 3rd Aliya (Shlishi) – 29:15-28

Moshe warns them against idolatry, which they had seen during the Egyptian exile. Forsaking the covenant will provoke God’s wrath and result in the Land being destroyed and the nation exiled.

**Question:** *Which materials were the Egyptians’ idols made of? (29:16). Answer on pg.6.*

## 4th Aliya (Revi’i) – 30:1-6

Moshe says to the people: “If you do stray and are exiled, you will return to God with all your heart and all your soul”. God will have mercy upon the people, releasing them from their captivity and bringing them in from wherever they have been dispersed. He will open the hearts of the nation to love Him unequivocally.

**Point to Consider:** *What lesson is derived from way the Torah phrases how God will “return our captivity”? (see Rashi to 30:3)*

## 5th Aliya (Chamishi) – 30:7-10

After Israel’s return to God, His wrath will be unleashed upon those enemies who persecuted her. God will bless the nation like He blessed their forefathers, in “the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your animals and the fruit of your Land”.

## 6th Aliya (Shishi) – 30:11-14

The Torah is not hidden, nor is it so far away that it is inaccessible – it is not “in the heavens”, nor is it “across the sea”; rather it is “very close” to us.

## 7th Aliya (Shevi’i) – 30:15-20

God has placed “life and good, death and evil” in front of the people, who are urged to “choose life”. That means loving God and walking in His ways. Heaven and Earth are called to bear witness to this responsibility and its consequences.

## Haftarah

Taken from the book of Yeshaya, this is the last of the ‘seven haftarot of consolation’ read after Tisha B’Av. The redemption will come, when Israel will be like “a bride who bedecks herself in jewellery”. The nations of the world will recognise Israel’s splendour. Though sullied by the blood stains of the struggles of exile, the nation should always be aware that God loves them and is guarding them. Eventually, Israel will be known as “the holy people, the redeemed of God”.



**United Synagogue Daf Hashavua**

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## Standing Today

by Rabbi Emanuel Levy, Palmers Green and Southgate United Synagogue



At the beginning of this week's sidrah, Moshe declares: "You are all standing today before Hashem" (Devarim 29:9). These words follow on from the 98 devastating curses mentioned in last week's

sidrah, *Ki Tavo*, which were destined to befall us if we were to veer away from the path of Torah observance. Rashi (1040-1105), quoting the Midrash, explains the juxtaposition of the two passages: "When the Israelites heard 100 curses minus two...their faces turned pale and they said, 'Who can stand up against these?' Moshe began to console them, saying, 'You are standing here today. Although you have angered Hashem, nevertheless, he has not destroyed you. You are all standing today before Hashem'".

The *Kehilat Yitzchak*, Rabbi Yitzchak Raitbard of Vilna, asks why the Midrash speaks of a 100 curses minus two, instead of simply referring to 98 curses? He answers that 98 of the curses are described openly, but there are another two which are stated somewhat vaguely, "even any **illness** and any **blow** that is not written in the Book of this Torah, Hashem will bring upon you" (28:61).

The very fact that these curses are ambiguous is even more alarming. If we know what misfortune may befall us, we can prepare for the event and hope to ride the storm of torment. One of the greatest fears we can have is of the unknown, because we can never know how to prepare.

It is this unknown factor which Moshe is speaking about at the beginning of the sidrah, when he notes that the people are all standing before Hashem: "You are all here today ... from the hewers of wood to those who draw water" (29:9). Even those who do menial tasks are included, because 'before Hashem' their merits may be greater than those of a higher social

status. Nobody really knows how they stand before the Almighty; that itself causes fear, if one is attuned to it.

Moshe's words of consolation, as explained in the Midrash, that "you are all here today" are plausible because of a factor mentioned later in the sidrah: "You shall return and listen to the voice of Hashem" (30:9). This refers to *teshuva*, repentance. A human court must judge criminals according to their actions, and criminals must bear the consequences of their crimes. In contrast, *teshuva*, whereby someone can repent and be forgiven, is not a normal legal possibility. *Teshuva* is referred to in Jewish literature as a *chiddush*, a novel idea which defies logic; *teshuva* is one of the great kindnesses which Hashem has bestowed upon us.

On this final Shabbat of the year, let us bear in mind that all of us will shortly be "standing before Hashem" in judgement on Rosh Hashanah. By returning to Him with all our hearts, doing sincere *teshuva*, may all of us be granted a *Ketivah Vechatimah Tovah*, inscribed in the Book of Life for the forthcoming Jewish year 5780.



# The Unity of Nitzavim-Vayelech

by Rabbi Shlomo Odze, Associate Rabbi, South Hampstead United Synagogue



As there are 54 portions of the Torah and normally 52 weeks of the year within which to read them, in some years we need to combine and read two Torah portions in the same week. This is to ensure that we complete

parashiyot and is perhaps why Rav Saadia Gaon regarded them as one parasha that is sometimes split into two.

However, there is a difference between the unity concepts in each of the parashiyot, which is why they can also be split when necessary.

In Nitzavim, the unity of the people is caused by their standing before God. When we elevate ourselves towards God, we are united as one nation. In Vayelech, on the other hand, Moshe brings himself to the nation.

Very shortly we will be combining both of these concepts of unity. Over the course of the Ten Days of Repentance we will be making extra efforts to elevate ourselves spiritually towards God individually and collectively. Let us remember that what unites us is not not only our closeness to God, but also the fact that we are part of the Jewish People – whether the head of a tribe or a water carrier (see Devarim 29:9-10).

the reading of the Torah in time for Simchat Torah.

Interestingly, with regards to the parashiyot of Nitzavim and Vayelech, Rav Saadia Gaon (882-942) states that they are in fact one portion that is divided into two when necessary, such as when we have too many Shabbatot before Simchat Torah and not enough parashiyot, as is the case this year.

If we look closely at the content of the two parashiyot, we can suggest why Rav Saadia Gaon was of this opinion. Nitzavim begins with the concept of unity within the Jewish people. Moshe says to the nation: “You are standing today, all of you, before the Lord your God; the heads of your tribes, your elders... your small children, your women... from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water” (Devarim 29:9). The entire nation together, without any difference in status, all stand equally in front of God. All crown God as King together over them.

The idea of unity also stands out in parashat Vayelech, which begins with the words: “Moshe went and spoke these words to *all* of Israel” and ends with: “Moshe spoke the words of this song into the ears of the *entire* congregation of Israel” – once again we have the concept of unity, with Moshe saying the same words to the entire nation, regardless of individual status.

The idea and message of unity is therefore the common theme running between these two



# Jewish Contemporary Ethics Part 42: Medical Ethics 4 – Cosmetic Surgery

by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman, New West End Synagogue



Whilst we may think of cosmetic surgery as a modern invention, it has a surprisingly long history. The first skin grafts and rhinoplasty (remodelling of the nose) were reportedly performed by the Indian

healer Suśruta in the 6th century BCE. Historically, the primary application of cosmetic surgery was to help those who had been disfigured by war, deliberate mutilation or through diseases such as syphilis. During the 20th century, many of those who had suffered horrific facial injuries during the two World Wars benefitted from improved surgical techniques. Cosmetic surgeons treated many cases and refined their procedures, particularly helping those disfigured by war or other circumstances to regain their dignity.

The pseudoscience of physiognomy (judging a person's character by their facial appearance) became popular in the late 19th century. It probably was the catalyst for those wishing to conform to societal ideals to use cosmetic surgery to improve their aesthetic appearance. Regrettably, physiognomy also fuelled antisemitism and other forms of racism which are still prevalent today.

Some rabbinic authorities, such as Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg (1915-2006) and Rabbi Shmuel Wosner (1913-2015) forbade elective cosmetic surgery on the grounds that there are health risks and that it is forbidden to deliberately endanger oneself (Devarim 4:9, 4:15). Other reasons include that a doctor's (human) mandate in some areas of Jewish thought is restricted to alleviating illness, rather than interfering with human aesthetics (see Shemot 21:19). The prohibition to wound oneself or employ another person to do so is also cited as a reason to forbid cosmetic surgery for purely aesthetic purposes.

However, other authorities, such as Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) and the late Chief Rabbi Lord Immanuel Jakobovits (1921-1999) permitted cosmetic surgery within certain guidelines. They contended that intentionally wounding oneself only applies to degrading or shameful acts; surgery which is intended to beautify would not fall into this category.

Rabbi Professor Avraham Steinberg, a doctor who is perhaps the leading cotemporary scholar of Jewish medical ethics, notes that earlier sources, such as Rabbi Menachem Meiri (1249-1306) and Rabbi Moshe Isserles (1525-1572) also support the notion that surgery which is performed to relieve the emotional anguish of a negative body image is permitted. Furthermore, he explains that 'emotional anguish' may include the shame one may feel in public about their appearance. During a discussion in the Talmud (Shabbat 50b) regarding the removal of unsightly scabs due to the pain they cause, the Tosafists (French medieval commentaries on the Talmud) note that there is no greater pain than the embarrassment of looking unsightly in public.

Furthermore, given the advancements in surgical techniques and the relatively low risks, modern cosmetic surgery would not necessarily be considered deliberately endangering one's life. This would imply that most modern rabbinic authorities would permit cosmetic surgery, albeit only in cases where there is a demonstrable benefit to the patient's mental health.



## Marking 80 Years Since the Beginning of WW2 Part 2: 'The Service of the Generations that Have Gone Before Us'

by Paula Kitching, AJEX Historian & Educational Officer, The Jewish Military Association



It may seem that over the last few years there has been nothing but commemorations of wars. Memorials stand near battlefields and in community buildings, synagogues and town

halls, as a constant reminder of the sacrifice and human cost of war. However, there is another side to the story of conflict and to the years of 1914–1945. That is the story of a community that demonstrated their service and loyalty to their nation.

During World War One, 50-55,000 Jewish men served in Britain's armed forces. The difficulty horrors of the conflict, the experience of camaraderie in the face of adversity and the sense of belonging to a wider world all contributed to a newly confident British Jewish community.

The veterans of the early 1920s were not prepared to put up with anti-Semitism and those men and women came together to take part in parades as Jews in uniform. They produced a book of Remembrance and they created AJEX (or the Jewish Legion as it was initially called).

These men and women stood up against the fascist societies that emerged across Europe in the 1930s. They were not afraid to verbally and physically stand up to threats and they were determined to uphold a Jewish identity that was also British.

During World War Two, even before the horrific events of the Holocaust were discovered, the British Jewish community was prepared and willing to serve again. Over 70,000 young Jewish men and women volunteered for war service: in the Army, the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force and the Red Cross, as well as in factories and

hospitals. The older generations served in the Fire Service and as Air Raid Wardens, resuming the drills of their youth for the Home Guard, with each generation inspiring the other and reminding all the community of what it meant to serve and to be counted.

The veterans of the World Wars that returned are not listed on war memorials. However, despite their exhausting and often terrifying experiences, they continued to make British Jewry secure, demonstrating the meaning of participation and loyalty. As the commemorations for the 80th anniversary of the start of World War Two get into full swing this autumn, let us all take some time to remember a generation whose service was inspirational. The AJEX Jewish War Memorial Remembrance Service at Willesden Jewish Cemetery on Sunday 6 October and the AJEX National Remembrance parade on Sunday 17 November provide opportunities to thank the generations that have gone before and to demonstrate our thanks to the ongoing service of members of the Jewish community today – they are upholding the ideals of those who fought in the past and continue to protect our security and freedom.

May the timeless words of Isaiah (2:4) be fulfilled speedily in our times and God grant us all a year ahead of blessing and peace:

“And He [God] shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (translation from ‘The Jerusalem Bible’, Koren Publishers).

Answer: Wood, stone, silver and gold

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**The US** Daf Hashavua | 10 September 2018 | 1 Tishrei 5779  
Candles for Second Night Rosh Hashanah should be lit after 8.15pm. Rosh Hashanah ends in London on Tuesday night at 8.12pm

Volume 31 No. 1 **Rosh Hashanah ראש השנה**  
The Fast of Gedaliah is on Wednesday, starting at 4.47am and ending at 8.04pm

In loving memory of Susi and Freddie Bradfield  
Sara Gitel bat Mordechai Menachem ז"ל and Yaacov ben Zvi ז"ל

## Shana Tova

From The US & the Daf Hashavua Team

Treasuring In...  
by Chief Rabbi Ep...



"He has not...  
He seen per...  
God is with...  
(Bemidbar)

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Rosh Hashanah

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...Moriah and bring him as an...  
...ously been told by God that...  
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...be offered instead.

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...Rabbi Shlomo Wolber...  
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...of God, while Moshe...  
...did likewise at the



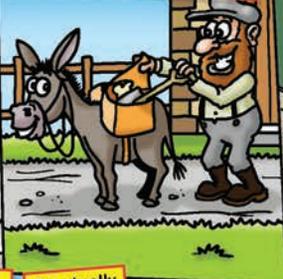
# THE TRIBE SCRIBE

NITZAVIM: TORAH TREASURES!

Berel tossed and turned. It was the fifth night in a row he'd had the same weird dream - about a big box of treasure buried at the foot of the bridge, over the River Shmerling in the big city of Tinsk.

Tinsk was far away from his little town of Plotsk but Berel couldn't let it go. He prepared for the long journey, packed his spade and went off to seek his fortune.

To his surprise, when he arrived, it wasn't like his dream at all. The city of Tinsk was paved all around the big bridge, definitely nowhere to dig for treasure! There were also two fierce looking soldiers standing guard at each end.

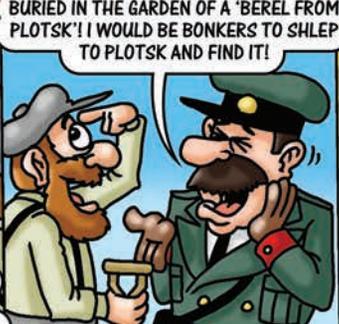


Not sure what to do, Berel hung around the bridge for a few days, he hadn't come this far for nothing...

Eventually

OI, YOU LOOK MOST SUSPICIOUS, HANGING AROUND HERE FOR DAYS. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

DREAM? YOU FOOL! DREAMS ARE MEANINGLESS! EVERY NIGHT I HAVE THE SAME DREAM ABOUT A TREASURE CHEST BURIED IN THE GARDEN OF A 'BEREL FROM PLOTSK'! I WOULD BE BONKERS TO SHLEP TO PLOTSK AND FIND IT!



Berel hurried home and started digging. Indeed, the treasure was there all along, in his own backyard.

I KEEP HAVING THIS DREAM ABOUT TREASURE BURIED NEXT TO THE BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER SHMERLING.

THIS WEEK'S PARASHA TELLS US: THE TORAH IS NOT FAR AWAY; NOT UP IN THE HEAVENS OR RIGHT ACROSS THE SEA. RATHER, IT IS VERY CLOSE TO YOU - IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART.



SOMETIMES WE DON'T REALISE WHAT TREASURES WE HAVE CLOSE BY. THE TORAH IS ONE OF THEM - AND IT IS RIGHT HERE WAITING FOR US.



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