



From the desk of  
**MORDECHAI MALKA**  
 Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel  
 Founder and President of Or Hamelech Institutions  
 Member of Chief Rabbinate of Israel



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

## Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

Religious Court of Elad \* Batei Hora'ah \* Religious Services \* Marriage Licensing \* Kashrut \* Mikvaot \* Eiruvim

### TORAT

### Parashat Nitzavim

### HAMELECH

#### All Together Now

Here we are, Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah, and the opening line says it all: "Atem nitzavim hayom kulchem" – "United we stand"... divided we fall!

If we are "kulchem" – all together now, then we stand a chance. If we let diversity and divisiveness get the better of us... oh, are we in for it!

A building is comprised of numerous materials: cement, sand, pebbles, iron, bricks, wood, plastic, etc. But if there is nothing which connects them, then you have no building at all, just a pile of rubbish. The greatness of a structure lies in its cohesiveness, for then it can become a towering edifice of stature and prominence and perseverance. A wind will not topple it if it has that magic ingredient which secures its togetherness. The same is true of our nation.

We need each other much more than we realize. Elisha asked the Shunamite woman, "Is there anything I can do for you? Can I speak on your behalf to the King?"

Zohar HaKadosh explains that the day was Rosh Hashanah. And the king was none other than the King of all Kings. And what was her response? "Betch ami anochi yoshevet". What was she

saying? She was saying: I do not want to be singled out. No, thank you, please do not mention any specific request on my behalf. I do not want my deeds to be scrutinized, for a decision to be made based upon my own worthiness. I would much prefer to be just one of a crowd, one of a greater whole, Klal Yisrael.

#### Peace or Bust

In the *haftorah* for Shabbat Teshuvah we see this as well. Hashem teaches that Efrayim, a collective name for Klal Yisrael, regrets having stooped to idolatry. Earlier in Hoshea (4:17) we find the navi saying that although they had committed the severe sin of idolatry, nonetheless, Hashem found in them merit not to punish them harshly since they were united as one. But later (10:2) when their hearts took separate courses, then they were taken to task for all of their misdeeds.

Based on the aforementioned verses in Hoshea, Masechet Derech Eretz (7:37) teaches: R' Elazar the Copper says: Love peace, despise divisiveness. Peace is so great that even when Klal Yisrael were idolaters but at peace with each other, Hashem would not lash out at them. But once they split apart, they receive a guilty verdict.



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Continues the Masechet Derech Eretz: A city with machloket will be destroyed, a shul with machloket will be destroyed, a house with machloket, likewise.

### Of Water and Wind

In Parashat Noach we see two different generations, each with its own type of sin. The generation of the flood was corrupt. They misappropriated each other's money and wives. They got wiped out.

The generation of the dispersion directly rebelled against Hashem. They literally waged war against the Almighty. One would expect their punishment to be utter eradication. But, no. Here the Almighty merely blows them in different directions. What was their right to survival? Peace! That is the answer. To show you: Great is peace and despised is discord. They waged war against Hashem, but with a united front. Hashem respected that! Can you believe it?! It's the truth. Chazal say it. Rashi brings it. Let it sink in.

### Never Alone

Birkat Kohanim concludes with a blessing for peace. And to whom is it given? Although the Kohanim were instructed to bless the children of Israel, nonetheless, the entire blessing is addressed in the singular form: May He bless you

(singular). This is to show that we are only worthy recipients of the Priestly Blessing if we are united as a collective nation. The blessing is then conveyed to that one unit.

We must do our utmost to always be together. One who goes alone at night is putting himself in danger. (Chullin 91a) Yaakov Avinu was quite a strong fellow. He rolled a huge rock off of the well with his little finger after not getting a good night's sleep for 14 years. Nonetheless, when he remained alone, along came Eisav's archangel to challenge him to a wrestling match.

In Parshat Haazinu we are taught that if one warrior can pursue a thousand of the enemy, two such warriors, working together can take on not two thousand, but ten thousand. Do not underestimate the power of togetherness, cohesiveness, community.

### The Downfall of Napoleon

In 1802, Napoleon was busy conquering Europe. He passed through Volozhin and invited Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin to speak with him. He had heard of Rabbi Chaim's genius and he asked him what he thought of his conquest of Russia. Will he be successful?

Reb Chaim responded with a parable. A prince once travelled in a chariot pulled by four steed



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horses. One horse slipped in the mud and the others soon followed suit and the whole chariot overturned. A poor farmer passed by with a simple wagon pulled by three simple horses. One horse slipped in the mud and the other two came to his rescue and pulled him out of the mud. The prince was stupefied. He wondered why his mighty horses did not do what those simple horses did.

The farmer explained: Each horse of yours is unique, and far different from the others. One is Arabian, one is Persian, one is Hungarian and I forgot the fourth. The main thing is – each is different and does not care about the other.

My horses, said the farmer, are one mother and its two children. They're all family. When one falls, it's only natural for the others to help it rise.

So too, said Reb Chaim, your army consists of soldiers of varying origins. When things get rough, they will show no loyalty to their poor fellow. The Russian folk feel comradeship. They will bravely defend each other and their homeland.

### Hanging in the Balance

The story is told of two good friends, one of whom was accused of espionage and sentenced to death. He begged to first take leave of his family and he left his close friend as collateral.

The agreement was that were the indicted not to show up at the set time, his friend will be hanged in his stead.

Well, the time arrived, the hour came and the indicted did not show up. So the ceremony began and they were about to execute the friend. At the very last minute, the indicted showed up and said, "I'm here, Hang me."

But the friend said, "No. He's too late! Hang me!"

The king and his court were stunned at the turn of events. They had never seen anything like this before. Two people, each begging to be hanged, in order to save a friend.

The king was overcome with emotion. He declared: Both of you are off the hook. On one condition. You accept me into this amazing friendship and make it a threesome.

What does this have to do with us? The pasuk says: Love your friend like yourself; I am Hashem. What is "Hashem" doing in this pasuk? When He sees the intensity of the friendship between fellow Jews, He exclaims: I want to be part of this, too! Let's make it a threesome!

We're all one. So let's get together. Let's care. United we stand.

**Shabbat Shalom and Ketivah Vechatima Tovah!**

**Mordechai Malka**