



The garden of life, the Rosh Hashanah Perspective 2022

The Rosh Hashanah Perspective is in honor of the Refuah Shlema of HaRav Amitai Ben Shoshanna, and in loving memory of Leah Mintche Bat Gittel, Edward Ben Efraim, Shlomo Ben Edward, and Yirachmiel Daniel Ben Gedalia.

It is no coincidence we always read the Torah portion of Nitzavim on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. Parshas Nitzavim has some of the most fundamental principles in all of Judaism. Some examples include the notion of free will, the necessity for unity between the Jewish people, the ultimate redemption, and the practicality of the Torah throughout all of time.

The holiday of Rosh Hashanah has two unique roles. On the one hand, it is a day of judgment and reckoning. On the other hand, it is a day we ask G-d to be our King and Sovereign once again. These contrasting purposes require a diverse set of emotions. First, feelings of repentance, humility, and remorse. Second, feelings of pride, importance, and significance because G-d wants us to crown Him as our King.

Hence, our Parsha begins with a powerful statement from Moshe: **"You are all standing today before Hashem. From the leaders, chiefs of tribes, elders, officers, to the men, women, young children, converts, woodchoppers, and the water carriers."**

Moshe is reiterating that the Jewish nation must stand together when we crown G-d as our King once again. We must be united when our names are

brought up in the Heavenly court before G-d for judgment. This unity and solidarity argue for us before G-d for a year of immense health, happiness, and success.

The unity of the Jewish people begins with unity within ourselves, the G-dly soul with the animalistic soul, the good inclination with the evil inclination. The harmony of our education and knowledge with our emotions, passions, and feelings. The consistency of our desires, hopes, and dreams with our reality and current situation.

The Alter Rebbe, Rav Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Chabad Rebbe, gives an example of this unity. He writes that life is like a garden; there are many plants, flowers, and vegetation that perfect the garden. Each plant, with its own features, colors, or fruit, totals the beauty and elegance of the garden.

The Alter Rebbe explains that our diversity and uniqueness form the Jewish people. First, within ourselves, the balance of our character and nature with the wisdom and desire of G-d. Then, on a larger scale, understanding the many paths that lead us to the same place, a deep relationship with G-d. Both of these steps are essential for the symmetry, harmony, and beauty of G-d's garden.

The Alter Rebbe continues that one of the biggest enemies of a beautiful garden is the unrestricted growth of weeds. Not only are they out of place, and ruin the balance of the garden. But because they steal and rob the nourishment the earth gives to the other plants and flowers. In spiritual terms, the weeds are the actions we do that ruin our lives and steal the spiritual energy we receive from G-d.

A balanced garden's main feature is its fruits and beauty's longevity, durability, and lifespan. It will outlive us and survive for many years, gifting its

serenity and peace to those desiring it. Similarly, a well-maintained spiritual connection pays dividends well beyond our physical life.

We can teach our children and grandchildren, who in turn, teach their children and grandchildren what Jewish pride is. How to live a meaningful and happy life. But the most significant outcome is the continuity of those who established our garden, passing on the legacy of our forefathers.

As we read Parshas Nitzavim on Shabbos and listen to the sounds of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, make a conscious decision to balance our gardens. In our everyday actions and our most personal feelings, seek an equilibrium and understanding of our true selves. On a larger scale, recognize the beauty of each soul and their path to our common goal, the total embrace of G-d.

May we merit to unite and stand before G-d and receive a year of health and happiness, purpose and meaning, growth and success!

“Life lives in the tension between our physical smallness and our spiritual greatness. Life is short, but when we lift our eyes to heaven, we walk tall.”

–Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Have an inspiring Rosh Hashanah!

Rabbi Sholom Yemini