

Dvar Torah Outline — Parashat Nitzavim: Standing Upright at Transitions, Carrying Forward Growth, and Entering a New Year

Abstract

Rabbi Shulman explains that Parashat Nitzavim's national “standing” is not a ceremonial moment but a spiritual mechanism for transition—whether from one leader to the next or from one year to the next. Each new stage in ' עבודת ה' demands a fresh approach, yet it can only succeed when it is built upon the gains (and lessons) of the previous stage. The proximity of Nitzavim to Rosh Hashanah highlights that the “new world order” of the coming year requires us to arrive upright, repaired, and strengthened by what the past year taught us.

I. Why does the Torah “stand up” the entire nation in Parashat Nitzavim?

A. The Midrash: Nitzavim marks transition points in Jewish leadership

- Rabbi Shulman cites a Midrash: whenever כלל ישראל moves from one מנהיג to another—each with a distinct ' דרך בעבודת ה'—there is a need for a communal “standing” moment.
- Examples of transitions:
 - From יהושע to משה
 - From יהושע continuing down through later leaders, up to שמואל הנביא

B. Rav Tzadok's question: why is this “standing” necessary?

- Rabbi Shulman brings Rav Tzadok: if the issue is simply that leadership changes, what is the deeper significance that warrants a מעמד of “ניצבים”?
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II. “Graduating” to a new **מדרגה** without discarding the previous one (1:31)

A. Transition is growth, not replacement

- Rabbi Shulman frames it as moving up a grade in school:
 - Advancing to the “next class” requires retaining what was learned before.
 - You cannot “skip steps”; success in the next stage depends on the prior stage serving as a springboard.

B. **משה** vs. **יהושע**: two approaches, one continuous ladder

- **משה** רבינו's mode:
 - Living “למעלה מן הטבע”—miracles, **תורה**, **פנימיות**, desert life (a reality not rooted in ordinary worldly living).
- **יהושע**'s mode:
 - Bringing **קדושה** into the natural world: entering **ארץ ישראל**, conquering and settling the land, and working the land.
- Key point:
 - The new challenge of **יהושע**'s era can only be met by carrying forward the spiritual achievements formed under **משה**.

III. Why Nitzavim always precedes Rosh Hashanah: entering a new **הנהגה** (3:31)

A. Rosh Hashanah as crowning Hashem—and beginning anew

- Rabbi Shulman notes:
 - We “crown” **הקדוש ברוך הוא** as King on Rosh Hashanah.
 - While Hashem is One, His **הנהגה** unfolds through different modalities and goals within creation.

B. “Different modalities” in time: months, Shabbat, days, even moments

- Rabbi Shulman describes a layered structure of changing spiritual opportunities:
 - Each month has its distinct character (including the idea of different permutations of **שם הוי'** across the year).

- Even Shabbat has its unique avodah, supported by the verse:

• **וְהָיָה מִדֵּי חֹדֶשׁ בְּחֹדְשׁוֹ וּמִדֵּי שַׁבָּת בְּשַׁבָּתוֹ**

(And it shall be, from new moon to new moon and from Shabbat to Shabbat.)

- Rabbi Shulman adds (from broader מוסר/מחשבה learning): time can be viewed as even more finely partitioned—each segment offering its own הנהגה and opportunity to serve Hashem.

C. End of year → a new “world order”

- Rabbi Shulman explains (following the Ramchal's framing):
 - At year's end, the prior system is “used up.”
 - On Rosh Hashanah, Hashem כביכול “recreates” the world—introducing a new הנהגה for the coming year.
 - Practical implication:
 - To succeed in the new year's הנהגה, one must bring along the accumulated success and growth of the previous year.
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IV. The personal question: what if I didn't have a successful year? (6:32)

A. The concern

- Rabbi Shulman acknowledges the reality:
 - Not everyone feels they had the best year, and some know they did not reach what they could have.

B. The Torah's structure: from Ki Tavo to Nitzavim

- Rabbi Shulman cites the idea of סמיכות הפרשיות:
 - The reason Ki Tavo (with its תוכחה) comes right before Nitzavim is:
 - **כְּדֵי שֶׁתִּכְלֶה שָׁנָה וּקְלָלוֹתֶיהָ**(So the year should end with its curses.)
- The principle behind it:
 - Unlike a mindset of “failure is final,” Jewish life assumes repair is possible and expected.

C. Falling as part of the growth system

- Rabbi Shulman emphasizes אמונה:
 - Hashem built a system where a person can grow specifically through missteps and hardship.

- He references the verse:
 - שֶׁבַע יָפֹל צַדִּיק וְקָם
(For a righteous person falls seven times and rises.)
 - And a Gemara in Berakhot on the verse:
 - נִפְלָה לֹא תוֹסִיף קוֹם בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל
(The virgin of Israel has fallen; she shall not continue to rise.)
 - Rabbi Shulman explains the דְּרָשָׁה: it is read not as despair, but as hope—she has fallen, she will rise, and then stop falling.
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V. From brokenness to uprightness: how to become “nitzavim” (9:00)

A. The task: extract learning and strength from the year

- Whether one succeeded or struggled:
 - The challenges, יְסוּרִים, and failures must be processed into lessons and growth.
 - If the lesson hasn't been learned yet, the avodah now is to learn it.

B. “Don’t enter the new role like a shmattah”

- Rabbi Shulman’s practical מוֹסֵר:
 - If you step into the new year feeling crushed and powerless, you are more likely to fail.
 - The movement is:
 - From Ki Tavo: a broken heart
 - To Nitzavim: קוֹמָה זְקוּפָה—upright posture and renewed strength

C. Goal: use prior gains as the springboard into the coming year

- Whatever success existed in the past year becomes the foundation for the new הַנְּהִיגָה.
 - Rabbi Shulman closes with a blessing that everyone should be מְצַלִּיחַ in the new year.
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In Summary

- Rabbi Shulman explains that “ניצבים” is a spiritual posture needed at moments of transition—between leaders and between years.
- Growth requires continuity: the next מַדְרָגָה in עֲבוּדַת ה' must build on the prior one rather than replace it.

- Rosh Hashanah introduces a renewed הנהגה—so entering it successfully demands bringing forward last year's gains.
- Even a difficult year can become a platform for standing upright, because Torah assumes repair: **שבע יפול צדיק וקם**.
- The avodah now is to move from the brokenness of תוכחה to the dignity and strength of נצבים—ready for the new year.