

MORASHAH
THE RABBINIC FELLOWSHIP OF THE UTJ
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Rabbi Ephriam I. Zimand

Parashat HaShavuah Series

Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelekh

At the conclusion of this *Shabbat*, we (*Ashkenazim*) begin our intense entry into the season of the *Yamim Nora'im* with the recitation of *Selichot*.

It is interesting to take note of the contrast between the names of the *parshiot* that constitute this week's double *parasha*: *Nitzavim* and *Vayelekh*. *Nitzavim* suggests standing still, the lack of any movement, status quo. In contrast, *Vayelekh* betokens mobility, striding forward, making progress.

Though contrasting, they are not incompatible. In fact, not infrequently, they are both necessary. We need to stop often in order evaluate where we are and from where we have come in order to be able to move forward effectively.

Yogi Berra, the Hall of Fame former N. Y. Yankee All-Star catcher, is not only known as having been an outstanding baseball player, but he is also known for pithy sayings, which on the surface, seem not to make much sense, and perhaps seem somewhat nonsensical. But, after having thought about them for a while, I have frequently discovered that there is indeed a great deal of profundity embedded in them. One such example is the saying attributed to him, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it." It occurs to me that the message he seeks to convey is not to become paralyzed into inaction when a difficult choice has to be made. You must at least make a choice, even when you cannot be certain it is the right or best choice. However before deciding which path to follow, you have to stop and evaluate, as best you can, in which direction to go. It is a "*Nitzavim-Vayelekh* moment."

The upcoming *Yamim Nora'im* and the new year we are entering also present us with a *Nitzavim-Vayelekh* situation. *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom haKippurim* provide us with the opportunity to temporarily stop the merry-go-round of our lives to evaluate: Where are we? What are we doing? And where do we want to go? That is the *Nitzavim*. When these days have passed, we enter the *Vayelech* phase, moving in the direction we have chosen in order to reach our destination.

May we all experience a successful *Nitzavim-Vayelekh* in the coming year of 5771.

Shabbat Shalom!

After 46 years in the pulpit rabbinate, Rabbi Zimand retired to Jerusalem.

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