

Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelech, 5773 (2013)

Dear Chavraya,

This Shabbos where we stand, the Shabbos before Rosh Hashannah, does not have a special name. Were I to give it one, I might call it the "Shabbos of Gates," *Shabbat Sh'arim*, a portal of pause as we prepare to enter the new year. In the midst of preparation for the coming days, (may I merit to also prepare on the level and in the way that we should all be preparing,) I have been unable to write as usual on the weekly portion, *Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelech, Atem nitzavim ha'yom kulchem/you are standing today, all of you*. I share with you instead, words of the Slonimer Rebbe that remind us of where we stand, reminding with great optimism and encouragement to look ahead with hope and confidence. So may we stand in the gate of this Shabbos, and then walk together into the new year.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Victor

Elul - - End or Beginning?

There are gates into the world, into the year, and into the soul. There is a gate that precedes the New Year. It is the month of Elul. The holy rabbi, Rabbi Yechiel Mamosh of blessed memory, said, "Elul is the beginning of the year." But Elul is the last month of the year, thus it is the end of the year. Indeed, the month of Elul is the beginning of a new year, for it is the gate upon which the entire New Year depends. According to the quality of preparation in the month of Elul, so the way of the coming year is set. There is a gateway into each month, and into each Shabbat. The nature of our rising in the morning is the gateway into the day. The very first line of the *Shulchan Aruch* declares, "one should rise into the day like a lion to the service the Holy One." The essence of a person is seen in their way of going forth through gates (the way we encounter and create transitions). A person's life depends on gates (transitions...). If one lifts up their gates fittingly in the month of Elul, so shall the entire year be built on a new level. And so too, all of the gates (of the year).