

# Shovavim

This is extra credit, not intended to be any thing other than informative. (This is a slightly updated version of a dvar Torah from previous years. So if it looks familiar, you know why.)

This week, the week of *parshat Shemot*, begins the period of *Shovavim*. *ShOVaVIM* is an acronym for the first six *parshiot* found in the book of *Shemot*: *Shemot, Vaera, Bo, B'shalach, Yitro, Mishpatim*.

According to the Arizal, this period is a time for repentance. It parallels the slavery, exodus and receiving the Torah that we read about in the aforementioned *parshiot*. Our sins are our slavery, our repentance our exodus, and our affirmation and re-commitment to the Torah is our receiving of the Torah.

Rebbe Nachman writes (Likutey Moharan II, Lesson #73) that saying Psalms both induces in oneself a stronger desire to repent and guides a person on his personal path to God, as well. He points out that this is alluded to in the very first verse of the *parshah*, "*v'eileH shemoT bneI yisraeL habaiM mitzraimaH eiT yaakoV isH u'vaitO...*" (These are the names of Yisrael's sons who came to Egypt with Yaakov, each one and his family...). In the Hebrew, the last letters in the verse spell out the words for Psalms and repentance.

For this reason some say additional Psalms beyond their regular, personal "quota." It was once customary to fast (as the Arizal prescribed) as an act of repentance, but this is no longer done. In Breslov, some (very few) refrain from eating animal products for one twenty-four hour period each week during *Shovavim*.

I wrote that those who refrained from eating animal products did so for one 24-hour period during the week (usually Thursday). My friend Gavriel corrected me and wrote that they did so only from *alot hashachar* (the crack of dawn) to nightfall. I did some research and sure enough he's right. However, there was at least one Breslover chassid, Reb Shmuel Shapira (obm), who did refrain for a full 24-hour period.

Have a nice rest of the week! You deserve it.

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