



S. FLORIDA ZMANIM
CANDLE LIGHTING
 6:58 PM
S'Z KRIAT SHEMA
 10:11 AM
SUNSET
 7:15 PM
MOTZEI SHABBAT
 7:49 PM

"Written by a Multifaceted Student Body, Whose Ambition is to Enrich and Enhance Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion"

PARSHAT NITZAVIM-VAYELECH

פרשת נצבים-וילך
 ~ כ"ה אלול תשע"א ~

RABBI JOSH GRAJOWER 1

A NEW CHOICE FOR A NEW YEAR

BRACHA BRAUSER ('13) 2

RABBI JOSH GRAJOWER

SHIR BEN-ZIKRY ('14) 2-3

As Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur quickly approach, many of us are probably thinking about our new year resolutions, focusing on areas in which we would like to improve in the coming year.

CARLY KOHLHAGEN ('13) 3-4

ALIZA BLUM ('12) 4

While this attitude might be noble and appropriate, it can sometimes lead to a misguided understanding of repentance and introspection. Albert Camus, a 20th century French philosopher, once said: "Don't wait for the last judgment, it takes place every day." Despite our devotion to repentance and introspection during the days leading up to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, we often ignore these important thoughts as our year continues on.

The פסוק in (ל:טו) states: "ראה נתתי לפניך היום את הטוב ואת המות ואת הרע" "See, I have placed before you *today* the life and the good, and the death and the evil." G-d here is informing His people that He has placed before them a decision to choose between good and evil. R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l highlights the word היום, today, in the פסוק. He explains that one might think the choice between good and evil is a one-time decision, or at least a decision we make occasionally during monumental moments. However, the truth is that we choose between good and evil every day. Every day we face new challenges, and every day we make the decision of how to act.

As we approach the days of judgment, one who feels that he or she has made mistakes should find solace and excitement in the fact that every day is a new day. One who feels that he or she has been succeeding with the challenges of life should remain motivated, as tomorrow is a new day and brings new challenges.

As we enter the new year, we should be introspective and continue to seek growth. The days leading up to Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are filled with excitement, spirituality and passion. We must incorporate these values into our daily routine and let them guide us throughout the day to day challenges of life. *Everyday* we must make the right decision – to choose good over evil.

B'AHAVA, MOSHE RABBEINU

BRACHA BRAUSER ('13)

This week we read a section of Moshe Rabbeinu's poignant "goodbye speech" to Bnei Yisrael in which he leaves them with advice for the rest of their lives. In a way, when reading this week's parsha, we can imagine that Moshe is speaking directly to us – infusing us with his wisdom and guidance.

In perek 30, psukim 11-14, Moshe says, "For this commandment, which I command you, this day, is not concealed from you, nor is it far away. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us and fetch it for us, to tell [it] to us, so that we can fulfill it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us and fetch it for us, to tell [it] to us, so that we can fulfill it?' Rather, [this] thing is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can fulfill it."

How do we understand these few psukim? It seems as though Moshe is only speaking about one particular mitzvah and how Bnei Yisrael should strive to achieve it- so how does this relate to us today?

Essentially, Moshe is communicating to Bnei Yisrael, and to each and every one of us that observing the mitzvot, and thus creating a close relationship with Hashem, is attainable. It is something that we can achieve by our own merit. It is not just (literally) "across the sea" in Israel where we can feel holy enough to follow the Torah. Nor is it something we can only do in a bubble of spirituality. Moshe says that Torah is "in your mouth" to convey the importance of tefillah--that through speaking directly to God we can keep the Torah ideals in our everyday lives. Through forging this bond with God we can ask for the guidance needed to keep ourselves moving forward.

In regards to the Torah "being in your heart," R' Noach Orlowek, the Mashgiach of Yeshiva Torah Ohr, discusses the importance of harnessing and holding onto a specific moment of spiritual closeness to Hashem in order to conjure it in a time of despair. Moshe is telling us to keep these spiritual moments bottled up in our hearts, to help us through our lives.

The fact that the last word of these psukim is "*laasot*," "to do," shows that Moshe is bringing the point home, telling us to start with a small action of Torah, and to gradually incorporate more Torah into our lives. Torah is so close; we just need to make it a part of us.

Imagine standing right in front of Moshe Rabbeinu and hearing these beautiful words of *chizuk* and *tochacha*. Imagine these psukim are signed "*B'ahava, Moshe Rabbeinu*," "With love, your Moshe." Essentially that's what Torah should be for us; a message to help guide us through our lives-- never too far from us.

THE TEST OF A LIFETIME

SHIR BEN ZIKRY ('14)

In *Parshat Nitzavim*, Hashem tells the Jewish people that He is placing before them life and death. He continues to say that Bnei Yisrael should choose life.

It is obvious that if one chooses life he will live, and if one chooses death he will die. However, our rabbis teach us that Hashem was not only referring to the physical realms of life and death; rather, Hashem was hinting to the daily tests He puts us through and whether or not we choose to "live" spiritually or "die" from making the wrong decision.

Continued page 3

Shir Ben-Zikry continued

If we allow our *yetzer hara* to dominate us, we are unfortunately choosing “death”, and thus stunting our spiritual growth. However, if we are able to overrule the *yetzer hara's* desires, following our *yetzer hatov*, we are choosing “life”.

Choosing our *yetzer hatov* over our *yetzer hara* is often a hard challenge, but in the end it is that which takes effort that will hold significant meaning in our personal lives.

It is definitely much easier to choose to not grow or to not challenge ourselves – and most of us tend to blindly follow this as a copout. However, the rabbis teach us to use the strength that Hashem granted us and apply it towards greatness. Hashem presents us with the choice of life so that we can “live,” and if we are able to make the right decision, we will be able to experience life with all of its gifts and blessings.

STAYING ON THE RIGHT PATH

CARLY KOHLHAGEN ('13)

At the end of this week's parsha, Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael that he knows they will sin after his death and, as a result, evil will befall them (Deuteronomy 31:29).

The Sfat Emet brings an interesting *mashal* to explain how Moshe's words can offer an applicable lesson to our lives today. A father and son once set out on a journey. They had to reach their destination by nightfall, as there were many people waiting for them. After walking for some time, they noticed luscious grapes growing on the side of the road. The son quickly turned to his father and asked if he could stop and taste the grapes. The father explained to his son that they could not taste them because they had to reach their destination in time. After another hour they came across another patch of grapes. The son again asked to taste them, and the father once again refused. The son begged and begged, until finally the father said, “OK. I must continue walking, but you can stop and collect some grapes on one condition: that you will follow behind me once you have had your grapes, and if you can't see me you must call out ‘Father, father’ and I will answer ‘Son, son,’ and then we will continue.” So the father continued on his way while his son collected the grapes. Shortly thereafter, the son began following his father once again. After a couple minutes, when the son could no longer see his father, he called out, “Father, father.” A moment later came the response “Son, son,” and the son continued eating and walking. Over the course of the next few hours this process repeated itself a number of times. The son kept eating more and more of the grapes, until suddenly he found himself in the middle of a clearing with no idea in what direction his father had gone. He called out “Father, father,” but there was no answer. He called out louder, but all he heard was the breeze brushing the leaves. The son immediately threw down the grapes and ran to find his father.

From this *mashal* we learn the reason why Moshe warns Bnei Yisrael before his death and why it is relevant for us today. Moshe is aware that Bnei Yisrael would soon enter the land of Israel and would start living an ordinary life. Moshe also knew that the *yetzer hara* would try to distract them from Hashem and His Torah and encourage them to become absorbed in the physical pleasures of the world.

This is even more true nowadays; especially with all of the technological advances, it is very easy for us to become sidetracked. Whether it is wasting time on Facebook or talking on cell phones, we can easily become caught up in the physical world of *olam hazeh* instead of focusing on *olam habah*, the next world, and we become distanced from Hashem.

Continued page 4

Carly Kohlhagen continued

Our yetzer hara is often able to gain control of us and steer us off of our righteous path, causing us to stop and “eat the grapes.” However, we must not stop; we must remember that we are in this world to accomplish something more, and that any fleeting physical desires presented to us must not dictate our lives. It is for this reason that before we fall too far behind and get lost, we must constantly involve ourselves in Hashem’s Torah and mitzvot, so we can remain connected to Him.

WHY US?

ALIZA BLUM (‘12)

In this week’s parsha, perek 31, pasukim 1-7, we read about the upcoming death of our leader Moshe and the transition to Yehoshua as our new leader. Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael that he is not allowed to cross the Yarden and enter Israel. We know that the Torah in *Parshat Chukat* tells us that Moshe was punished for not sanctifying the name of Hashem and therefore he was not allowed to go into Israel.

Why is it that Moshe, the holiest man alive, the man who was able to have conversations with God on a whim, was not allowed to go into Israel because of one sin, and yet we, the nation with so much corruption in our midst, can go in whenever we want to? What message are we to take from this perplexing distinction?

Hashem wanted to convey to us that we must appreciate the fact that we are able to go into Israel. Sometimes we take it for granted, unlike Moshe who understood the value of the opportunity to enter Israel.

Unlike Moshe, arguably one of the greatest people who ever lived, we have the ability to go to Israel whenever we please. We need to appreciate what we have and not let anyone take it away from us. We are the future of the Jewish nation and we must understand the importance of Israel – that Israel is our home.

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