



Parshat HaShavuah

NITZAVIM

נצבים

SEPTEMBER 15, 2012

כ"ח אלול תשע"ב

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Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting

7:07

S"Z Kriat Shema

9:36

Sunset

7:24

Motzei Shabbat

7:58



Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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NAME THIS MITZVAH
RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

It is not a coincidence that our פרשה falls out right before ראש השנה. In פרק ל פסוק יא, the תורה tells us; "כי המצוה הזאת אשר אנכי מצוך היום לא נפלאה היא ממך ולא רחוקה היא" – "Because this mitzvah which I command you today, it is not hidden from you and it is not distant."

What is this מצוה that the תורה speaks of? רש"י and others explain that the תורה is referring to the mitzvah of תלמוד תורה – learning Torah. The תורה teaches us that everyone has the ability to learn תורה and it is not unattainable. It is within our reach and anyone can do it.

The רמב"ן takes a different approach. He explains that this is the מצוה of תשובה. תשובה is something that we can do and it should always be on our minds.

Is there any connection between these two opinions? Rabbi Aharon Kotler explains that they are really one and the same. The תורה is teaching us a new dimension for תשובה. The purpose of תשובה is for a person to rekindle their relationship with Hashem. Through תשובה a person is able to get closer to Hashem. The תורה is what facilitates that connection. Through the learning of the תורה a person gains a greater closeness to and responsibility for their relationship with Hashem. תורה is the vehicle through which we are able to fully actualize our תשובה.

May this coming year be full of תלמוד תורה which will help fill our year with health, happiness, and growth for ourselves and our entire family.





KNOW THE CONSEQUENCES DANIEL GELLER ('13)

Throughout Sefer Devarim, Moshe warns Bnei Yisrael of future events that do not seem very practical for them now. For example, Moshe makes it perfectly clear that worshiping idolatry will ultimately undermine the nation that Hashem establishes. Moreover, all of Hashem's actions are to prove a point: If a nation forgets its past and becomes conceited, they will inevitably become corrupt.

If this were to develop into the truth, Moshe predicts that those who are rich will neglect the poor, and those with power will afflict the powerless. Thus, Moshe forewarns Bnei Yisrael that if they are to forget their dependence on Hashem, their society will exist in turmoil.

Throughout our education we learn “חכם עיניו בראשו” or, “A wise man’s eyes are in his head.” Since Moshe has truly looked ahead to see that great nations die from within, he feels he must alert the Jews as well.

This is a message we can all apply today in our jam-packed lives: With whatever choices and paths we are given, we must realize that our decisions and actions precede their repercussions and ramifications to come.

Adapted from a shiur given by Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

WE WILL SURVIVE TOVA BITTERMAN ('16)

This week’s parsha begins with Moshe addressing the Jewish people, saying: “You are standing here today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers – all the men of Israel. Your small children, your women, and your proselyte who is in the midst of your camp...” (Devarim 29:9-10).


Rashi explains that after hearing the curses in last week’s parsha, the Jews feared that it would be impossible to survive them if they should come to sin against Hashem. That is why Moshe starts off by saying, “You are standing here today,” showing Bnei Yisrael that despite the sins they have committed in the past, they are still alive and have not been wiped out. Moshe sought to comfort and reassure them that, despite their flaws, they are still being viewed favorably in Hashem's eyes.

The Kli Yakar asks: Did Bnei Yisrael not hear the 98 punishments so that they would not sin? How could Moshe then tell them not to fear, even if they still “stand before Hashem”?

Moshe’s comment teaches us that he is speaking to the Jews as a unified nation. Moshe explains that if an individual transgresses the Torah, he should be punished; but even if many are punished, the Jews will continue to survive as a nation.

Continued Page 3





Bitterman continued

This parsha is always read before Rosh Hashana. Normally, when preparing to be judged we are nervous and worried. However, for Rosh Hashana we dress in Yom Tov clothes and prepare meals, as opposed to fasting and wearing sackcloth. Why do we act in this way?

Although we are each worried about ourselves, we know that Hashem has chosen us as His nation and that will never change, so as a whole we will be judged for the good.

THE EVERLASTING TORAH

KELLEY TRIPP (‘13)

Moshe is nearing the end of his life. He chooses this auspicious moment to impart to his nation what he believes is his most vital message. He assembles all of Bnei Yisrael, “*Nitzavim kulchem*,” because this message is universal; it is all-inclusive and to be lived and remembered forever.

In Devarim 30:11 he begins, “It is not hidden from you and it is not distant.” Moshe is referring to the unique and complex Torah as he begins to disprove all possible excuses of forgetting the Torah. Moshe fears that the people will blame the Torah for being too far, for being too unreachable. “It is not in the heavens,” says Moshe, “...it is very near to you!” Moshe is begging Bnei Yisrael to understand in the truest sense that the Torah is at their fingertips.

Moshe then acknowledges the possibility that when the situation changes, Bnei Yisrael might begin to believe that the Torah is not applicable to their lives. Moshe is warning his nation that is standing before him with open ears that their children will one day say, “Who can ascend to the heaven for us and take the Torah for us, so that we can listen to it and perform it?”

This can be compared to Jews in Europe over the last several centuries, who kept Judaism to its fullest extent. Yet, when they arrived to America (like Bnei Yisrael arrived to Israel) many said “This religion is not for us, today, in these surroundings. It was good on the other side of the ocean, but not here.”

Moshe warns of this future problem and immediately stresses the notion that, the Torah is not on the other side of the ocean. Moshe tells his nation, adult and child alike, that environments do not dictate whether or not the Torah belongs in one’s life. Rather, it is the Torah that should dictate to the environment what principles and ways of life are necessary. Moshe is ingraining in the psyche of Bnei Yisrael that they must believe that the Torah is not solely for the angels; the Torah is real and the Torah is right beside us. To Moshe, it was of the utmost importance that his nation realize that the Torah is about elevating the physical to the spiritual. It is about taking the mundane aspects of life and infusing them with spirituality, thereby making the Torah real.



“מזור לדור”

TORAH FROM OUR ALUMNI

FOR IT IS NOT IN HEAVEN

YAKIR BITTERMAN ('06)

This week's parsha contains the famous pasuk, "It is not in heaven, to say who can ascend to the heaven for us to take it for us so that we can listen to it and perform it" (Devarim 30:12). This verse holds significance when it comes to the matter of deciding halacha. In *Gemara Bava Metzia*, Rabbi Eliezer declares that an oven made of separate coils is not capable of becoming impure, however the sages disagreed. Unhappy with this argument, Rabbi Eliezer asked for various wonders to happen to prove he is in fact correct. His ultimate wonder is a heavenly voice calling out saying, "Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer, with whom the halacha always agrees?" Rabbi Yehoshua responds by saying, "It is not in heaven..."

This well-known tale may cause one to think the pasuk above is impractical. If the heavenly voice provides overwhelming evidence in Rabbi Eliezer's favor, how can Rabbi Yehoshua simply state that the Torah is not in heaven, that it is not for heaven to decide? However, just like everything else in the Torah, this pasuk is important and holds vital significance for us.

The Chatam Sofer explains the importance of Rabbi Yehoshua's declaration, suggesting that without Rabbi Yehoshua's words, the integrity of our halachic code would be in jeopardy.

For example, if a prophet comes forward with a prophecy that a halacha has changed or is not being observed correctly, we do not listen to him because halacha is eternal and can only be determined by the sages of the age, also protecting against people changing halacha through performing "miracles," by magic or machinations. We see the importance of the oral law and our sages, which teaches us that we should have the utmost respect for a Torah sage.

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