

Candle Lighting

7:24

S”Z Kriat Shema

10:10

Sunset

7:41

Motzei
Shabbat

8:16



Parshat HaShavuah

נצבים-וילך

NITZAVIM-

VAYEILECH

AUGUST 31, 2013

כ"ה אלול תשע"ג

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חלקינו מה טוב

Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

1, 4

IT'S ALL UP TO YOUR MOUTH

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

DANIELLA COHEN ('15)

2

Timing is everything. Sometimes it's when that shot goes in right before the buzzer, sometimes it's when we figure out the answer to a question on a test right before time is up, and other times it's when you need medical assistance and there is a doctor standing right next to you.

JESSICA GRIFF ('15)

2-3

ISAAC KURTZ ('14)

3-4

It is not a coincidence that our parsha falls out right before Rosh Hashana. In perek 30 pasuk 11, the Torah tells us “כי המצוה הזאת אשר 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 mitzvah that the Torah speaks of? The Ramban explains that this pasuk is discussing the mitzvah of teshuva, which is something that we can with certainty attain. The Torah continues and says that the mitzvah of teshuva is not only attainable, but it's "בפיך בלבבך לעשות" —“In your mouth and in your heart to do” (30:14). Aren't those two ideas essentially the same? Once the Torah conveys to us that teshuva isn't distant but is, in fact, very near, isn't it redundant to say that it is also “in your mouth and in your heart”?

Rav Meyer Twersky explains that it is the nature of one who sins to shift the blame upon others. “I cannot daven well because of the massive assignment I am working on,” or “they need my help so I do not have time to bench,” or “my friends are not the type to perform those acts of chesed.” We tend to shift the blame towards others instead of owning up to it ourselves. Just like Adam HaRishon said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate”(Bereishit 3:13-14).

Continued Page 4





PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

DANIELLA COHEN ('15)

In these parshiyot, Moshe Rabbeinu establishes a final covenant between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael. This *brit* obviously includes every Jew, no matter what his social, financial, or religious standards are. However, when Moshe describes the covenant, he declares, “And every person of Israel, from those who chop the wood to those who draw forth the water to enter into the Covenant with the Lord your G-d” (Devarim 29:10-11).

It seems like, although Moshe is trying to cover the spectrum of social classes, he only uses two examples from the same category. He could have said “From the elders and sages to those who chop wood, and from the tribes’ leaders to those who draw forth water.” Why instead does Moshe use woodchoppers and water carriers—two similar types of men—to describe diversity within the nation?

Because Hashem is an eternal being, Moshe must have established this covenant for past, present, and future generations. In Sefer Bereishit, the Torah describes Avraham as a “chopper of wood,” as he performed this act during Akeidat Yitzchak. Eliyahu is later described as a “drawer of water” as he fills and pours jugs of water onto his korban during a contest with the Prophets of Baal.

With these descriptions, we see Moshe’s true intention: to incorporate the broad spectrum of Jewish history into the covenant. He begins with the first patriarch of Judaism, Avraham himself, and extends his *brit* to Eliyahu, the navi that will bring forth Mashiach’s arrival. Thus, Moshe truly does include each Jew in this covenant with Hashem, which clearly demonstrates the continuity of Torah.

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERSHIP

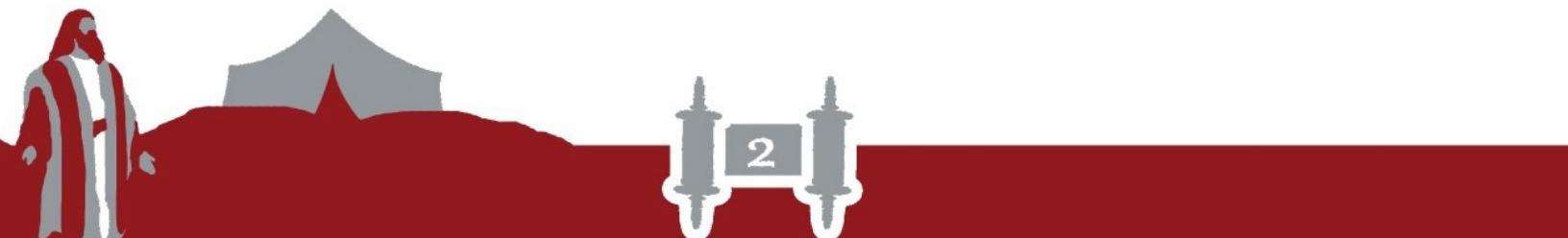
JESSICA GRIFF ('15)


In Parshat Nitzavim, Moshe relinquishes his responsibilities of leadership and hands the nation to Yehoshua to lead them into Israel. Along with the leadership, Moshe and G-d bless and encourage Yehoshua separately. Moshe says, “Be strong and courageous, for you shall come with the people to the land” (Devarim 31:7). G-d’s blessing is extremely similar except for one nuance: Moshe says “*תבוא*”—go with the people into Israel while G-d says, “*תביא*”—bring them into the land.

Rashi points out this minuscule difference and suggests that these two words hint to and symbolize two different types of leadership. By saying “go with the people,” Moshe hints to Yehoshua to heed the elders’ advice and opinions. On the other hand, G-d tells Yehoshua to “bring” the nation into the land, even if it is against their will.

It seems strange that Hashem encourages Yehoshua to rule singlehandedly when G-d himself is known for consulting the angels on varying matters. In Bereishit, Hashem says, “Let us create man in Our image” (Bereishit 1:26). Rashi points out that Hashem consults the angels to prevent them from feeling jealous. Similarly, he confers with His heavenly court when judging kings, because a greater authority seeking advice from a lesser source shows great humility.

Ironically, Moshe, who is telling Yehoshua to “go,” to seek and heed the advice of the elders, ruled independently. Moshe metaphorically hits the nation on the head when hitting the rock out of frustration, and he therefore loses his own leadership.





Griff continued

Based on this example, one might think that Moshe would be the one to tell Yehoshua to (forcefully) bring the nation into the land, while Hashem would suggest he lead with consensus.

Perhaps at the end of his life, Moshe realizes his shortcomings. By telling Yehoshua to “go” with Bnei Yisrael, Moshe is making up for his mistakes. During his leadership, he did not give the people enough say and responsibility, which most likely contributes to their fear of entering the land. Therefore, Moshe encourages Yehoshua to involve the people in the decision-making conversation and process because he thinks Yehoshua will be successful that way.

Hashem changes his mindset of leadership from the beginning of Bereishit because He believes Yehoshua needs to be leading in the front while crossing over the Jordan River. While in general G-d would agree with a consensus leadership, He feels that in this sensitive case, Yehoshua needs to hold Bnei Yisrael’s hand and drag (“bring”) them into the land, possibly against their will.

Remember, the first time the spies travel into Israel, ten out of twelve of them return with a negative report. The majority of the people side with the ten spies and are scared to continue the journey into Israel. From that point, Hashem does not want Yehoshua to “go” with the people, because the people’s judgment can’t be trusted. Instead, He needs Yehoshua to “bring” the Jewish people to their destined home in Israel.

REESTABLISHING OUR FAITH

ISAAC KURTZ (‘14)

As Parshat Vayeilech opens, we reach the end of Moshe’s final speech to the people. He has enumerated hundreds of mitzvot for Bnei Yisrael in perakim 12 through 26, and he reestablishes a covenant with them in Parshat Nitzavim. However, after all this has been done and Moshe takes leave of the people, he adds on one more mitzvah. This Mitzvah is of course *hakhel*—the mitzvah to bring all of Bnei Yisrael together once every seven years to hear the reading of the Torah. The somewhat obvious question to ask here is, why is this mitzvah saved until now? Why does Moshe teach this mitzvah specifically here, in his parting words to the leaders of the nation?

While many offer answers to this question, the Rambam in Hilchot Chagiga (3:5-6) suggests an especially interesting answer. He notes that there is an obligation for everyone to come forth to hear the reading of the Torah during *hakhel*. Whether it is someone who does not understand Hebrew, a child, or a scholar who has learned the passages countless times; no matter where each person is in their individual Torah study they are still obligated to come together as a whole.

The Rambam even goes so far as to say that, “One who is not able to hear – he concentrates inwardly on this reading, which the Torah establishes solely for the purpose of strengthening the true faith.” From all this we can conclude that *hakhel* has a much more intrinsic value than simply listening to the Torah.

Continued page 4



Kurtz continued

Several commentators cite the idea that this gathering every seven years is for a reestablishment of both the covenant at Har Sinai and the covenant just mentioned in Parshat Nitzavim. All three gatherings include a commandment for “the men, the women, the children, and the stranger who is in your gates.” Thus, the mitzvah of *hakhel* is also a return to the covenant of the plains of Moav and to the covenant at Har Sinai. This is also reinforced by the Rambam, who notes that during *hakhel*, one “should regard himself as though he has just now been commanded, and from the mouth of God himself, for the king is an agent to make God’s words heard.”

This explanation of the mitzvah of *hakhel* provides an additional reason for its location after all the covenants made in Parshat Nitzavim. The mitzvah of *hakhel* must come after the forging of that covenant because it is meant to bring the nation back, for all eternity, to the forging of that covenant.

We can bring this lesson into our own lives by realizing that the Torah is not only accepted by our ancestors in the desert. In our times, we have a chance to rededicate and reaccept the Torah and its values upon ourselves. With Rosh Hashana right around the corner, may we all seek to reaffirm our beliefs in our covenant and come closer to Hashem.

Rabbi Hochman continued

Unfortunately, when we make mistakes, we claim that “our upbringing is responsible” or “society is to blame,” when in reality the only ones to blame are ourselves. Therefore, the Torah encourages us that teshuva is “in your mouth...to do.” The teshuva process begins “in your mouth,” by confessing and thereby accepting responsibility for your sins.

Anyone can have a bad day, but no one can MAKE you have a bad day but yourself. The choices we make and our ability to learn and grow from them are a real testament to our acceptance of personal responsibility for our actions—an essential element of the teshuva process. !תביבה וחתומה טובה!

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