



פרשיות נצבים-וילך
Parshiot Nitzavim-Vayeilech

Ashreinu | אשרינו

ENHANCING YOUR STUDY OF THE WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



TIMING IS EVERYTHING

RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

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OLIVIA KAHANE ('23)

ARIELLA GREENBERG ('22)

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CALEB BERMAN ('23)

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 right before the bell rings,

and other times it's when you need medical assistance and there is a doctor right next to you.

It is not a coincidence that our parsha falls out right before Rosh Hashana. The Torah 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” (Devarim 30:11). What is this mitzvah that the Torah

speaks of? Rashi and others explain that the Torah is referring to the mitzvah of Talmud Torah -- learning Torah. The Torah teaches us that everyone has the ability to learn Torah and it is not unattainable. It is within our reach and anyone can do it.

The Ramban famously takes a different approach. He explains that the Torah here is talking about the mitzvah of teshuva. *Teshuva* is something that we can do and it should always be on our minds. While this *machloket* reveals many fundamental differences, is there any connection between these two opinions?

Rabbi Aharon Kotler explains that they are really one and the same. The Torah is teaching us a new dimension for *teshuva*. The purpose of *teshuva* is for a person to rekindle their relationship with Hashem. Through *teshuva* a person is able to get closer to Hashem. *Teshuva* is what facilitates that connection. Through the learning of the Torah person

gains a greater closeness to and responsibility for their relationship with Hashem. Torah is the vehicle through which we are able to fully actualize our *teshuva*. May this coming year be full of Torah learning, living, and growth which will help fill our year with health and happiness for ourselves, our families, and all of Klal Yisrael.

ALL IN

OLIVIA KAHANE ('23)

אַתֶּם נֹצְבִים הַיּוֹם כְּלָכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם רְאִשֵׁיכֶם
שְׂבָטֵיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם וְשֹׁטְרֵיכֶם כָּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל: טַפְכֶם נְשִׂיכֶם
וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ מִחֻנְיֶךָ מִחֻטְבַּי עַד שְׂאֵב מִיְמֶיךָ

“You are all standing on this day before Hashem, your God, the leaders of your tribes, your elders, your officers, every man of Israel, Your children, your wives, and your convert you are within your camp both your woodcutters, and water drawers” (Devarim 29: 9-10).

These pesukim go into great detail about who was there when receiving the covenant from Hashem. If the pasuk says, “you are all standing on this day...”, why does it then need to go into so much detail about who was there; don't we already know it was everyone?

The Torah wants to show that it was important for each person or group of people to be there for a specific reason. Rashi tells us that the reason it mentions the heads of the tribes, elders, and officers first is because the more prominent stood in front. The Sfrono teaches us that the reason for the head of the tribes, the elders, and the officers being listed first is because these are categories of people who have authority, and they teach the people of Bnei Yisrael. We now have a better understanding why it specifically lists heads of the tribes, elders, and officers. However, why does it then go on to list the children, wives, converts, woodcutters, and water drawers?

One understanding, offered by the Sfrono, is that by listing all the people that were involved, the Torah emphasizes the importance of every individual in Bnei Yisrael.

The Ramban teaches us another understanding as to why the pasuk tells us that the children were there. He explains that the children were brought there as well to highlight the fact that Hashem is also signing a covenant with the generations of the future, not just the generation of people standing before Him. From these pesukim in Parshat Nitzavim, we learn the importance of *achdut*, and the importance of every person in our nation.

WE'VE GOT THIS!

ARIELLA GREENBERG ('22)

In Parshat Nitzavim, Moshe gives Bnei Yisrael an important reminder.

לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם, הוּא לֵאמֹר מִי יַעֲלֶה לָנוּ הַשָּׁמַיִמָּה
וְיִקְחֶהָ לָנוּ וְיִשְׁמַעֲנוּ אֹתָהּ וְנִשְׁמָנָה

“It is not in the heavens, that you should say, “Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?” (Devarim 30:12).

Moshe conveys the important message from Hashem that Torah isn't in the heavens. Of course the Torah isn't in the heavens! We already know that Hashem gave Moshe the Torah from heaven to take back down to Earth on Har Sinai; this happened several parshiyot ago! This begs the question of what *לא בשמים היא* really means?

One pasuk earlier, the Torah states:

כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצוּר הַיּוֹם לֹא
נִפְלֵאת הִיא מִמֶּךָ וְלֹא רְחוּקָה הִיא

“This mitzvah which I enjoin upon you this day is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach” (Devarim 30:11).

The midrash (Devarim Rabbah) makes a distinction between how a fool approaches Torah study versus someone who is alert. A fool exclaims: “When will I have the time to learn all of this?”, and leaves the Beit Midrash. A wise person recognizes that Torah is accessible to us as long as we go about it in the right way and therefore goes about studying chapter by chapter in order to master Torah learning.

SO FAR, SO CLOSE

JUDAH BERMAN ('21)

This distinction is extremely applicable to our lives. Sometimes we take on the mindset of the fool. Torah can seem overwhelming, and a relationship with Hashem can feel out of reach, so it is easy, and even understandable, to feel like giving up sometimes. The words *לא רחוקה היא* and *לא בשמים היא* are Hashem's reminder to us that Torah really is within reach and isn't some far away concept that is impossible to grasp. The gemara in Masechet Niddah (30b) explains that as fetuses in the womb, we are taught the entire Torah, but then before birth we forget it all. What's the point in this unborn baby being taught all of the Torah if once they are born they will not remember any of it? A beautiful interpretation of this gemara by Rav Soloveitchik zt"l is that the gemara teaches us that every Jew is born with a pre-existing affinity for Torah. The Torah truly is in reach, because somewhere way back before we even existed in this world, when we were just *ne-shamot*, we were already given the gift of Torah knowledge. The purpose of learning Torah before birth is so that when we are born, we already have a natural connection to it, if we want to form that connection. This gemara further emphasizes just how much we as Hashem's children are predisposed to Torah learning. As Moshe passed on the baton of leadership to Yehoshua and Bnei Yisrael are about to enter a foreign land, this reminder is even more important. Since becoming a nation with a Torah, Bnei Yisrael has always had Moshe as a leader and Hashem's *shechina* to guide them through the desert. In this week's parsha, as the shift is about to happen, it is crucial that Hashem reassure Bnei Yisrael that even now, in this new era that they are about to enter, Torah and Hashem are always accessible. Similarly, today in *galut* this message applies to us. Moshe's message from Hashem of *לא רחוקה היא* and *לא בשמים היא* teach us that if we want a connection to Torah and to Hashem, all we need to do is reach for it, and Hashem will be thrilled to connect to us, His prized children. May all of us build connections to Torah and Hashem and understand the true meanings of the pesukim in this week's parsha. Shabbat Shalom!

Parshiyot Nitzavim-Vayeilech detail the last few days before the death of Moshe Rabeinu. In his last hours, Moshe leaves behind a couple important messages to the Jewish people. Moshe says,

אם-יהיה נדחך בקצה השמים משם
יקבצך ה' אלקיך ומשם יקחך

"If your outcasts have been driven out to the farthest parts of heaven, from there will the Lord your God gather you, and from there will he fetch you" (Devarim 30:4). Moshe offers a reassuring message to the Jews that God will always be there, even if they are scattered. Then (Devarim 30:12) Moshe goes on to say,

לא בשמים הוא לאמר מי יעלה-לנו השמימה
ויקחה לנו וישמענו אתה ונעשנה

"It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it."

While these pesukim don't necessarily contradict each other, they do offer different meanings that seem weirdly placed because of their proximity to each other. How can the Jews be scattered and yet always be so close to Hashem?

The only part of the question that deserves investigation is us being close to Hashem. What does this truly mean? In order to answer this, we must understand the phrase: "chase your dreams." We constantly chase after our dreams, mere figments of our imagination, because we believe them to be achievable. The message that "Torah is in the heavens" has a very similar meaning. We sometimes see the mitzvot as unobtainable and hard to get. These mitzvot are impossible to do and there are too many of them! Therefore the pasuk comes to teach us that the mitzvot aren't as hard or unobtainable as we think they are. And the two pesukim come together to teach us that even when we are spread thin and the Jews are scattered, we can still do mitzvot.

While we are in *galut*, it is harder than ever to re-

tain Hashem's knowledge and Torah, but if we acknowledge that mitzvot are closer to us and easier to do than we think, we can rejuvenate our relationship with Hashem. Once we can do this, we will then live happy and fulfilling lives. Good Shabbos.

OUR FUTURE

CALEB BERMAN ('23)

This week is a double parsha, Parshiyot Netzavim-Vayelech. In this week's Torah portion, we read about the sealing of the covenant between the Jewish people and Hashem.

The Torah states:

אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני ה' אלקיכם ראשיכם
שבטיכם זקניכם ושוטריכם כל איש ישראל. טפכם נשיכם
וגרך אשר בקרב מחניך מחטב עציך עד שאב מימך

"You are all standing this day before the Lord, your God – the leaders of your tribes, your elders and your officers, every man of Israel; your young children, your women, and your convert who is within your camp; both your woodcutters and your water drawers, as you enter the covenant of Hashem your God" (Devarim 29:9-10).

This description of the Jews is very strange. Why does the Torah include the lowest levels of society like the water drawers and the woodcutters along with the leaders and officials?

The answer is quite simple. The Torah mentions all levels of society to explain that agreements aren't only made by the leaders! The people of the nation need to agree too. The leaders shape the country, but the people have to agree and follow the leaders for society to work. This raises the question: why were the children present? They don't understand what is happening so what purpose do they have at the covenant? The Ramban provides a beautiful answer. The children were present to show that the covenant is a signing between God and all future generations. We bring the children with us, despite the fact that they don't know what's happening, because they are our future and must be brought up properly with good values. This Torah portion teaches us the importance of Jewish pride and instilling Jewish values in our children. Many Jews have sacrificed their lives to preserve the Jewish nation and we teach Jewish values to our future generations to keep our nation alive.

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