

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 28 Elul 5778, the last Shabbat in this Jewish year. We do not bensch Rosh Chodesh; and we say Av HaRachamim.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 878 Hz) (p.1138 S) (p. 786 Hi) (p. 1086 AS)

NITZAVIM נִצְּבִים Deuteronomy 29:9

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED), Rabbi Emeritus, Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale]

1. Rav Nachman of Bratzlav comments that we should look through the entire book of Devarim and we would note that at every place Moshe admonishes the Jewish people to keep the Torah, he uses the word *Hayom*, today, to teach us that it is important to begin today. Every day is a new beginning and each hour of the day as well. I am not one who is prone to Chassidische Torah yet Rav Nachman's insight here is pervasive within the thinking of our Sages. We should always look at every day as being a new beginning. This is true especially for the parshah of Nitzavim which is always read on the last Shabbat of the Jewish year. We sit virtually on the eve of Rosh Hashanah today and the words speak loudly that we should envision our life beginning again with the onset of Rosh Hashanah. Every day is that new day and the dawning of a renewed commitment to Torah observance.

[How interesting that the Rambam, echoing the words of our Sages, tells us that we should envision every day of our life as being the last day, meaning that we should repent and straighten out our books in God's hands and prepare ourselves to meet our Creator for our own personal final judgment. With this combined analysis, today is our last day, and it is also our first day. The combination does not mean exclusive contradiction; it means that we should be motivated to make each day count in our lives. (RED)]

2. Our parshah includes a second Covenant between God and the Jewish people. The difference between the Covenant on Mounts Gerizim and Eival, and the Covenant made at Sinai, is explained by the Kli Yakar (on verse 9). The Kli Yakar states that during the ceremony on Mounts Gerizim and Eival the nation established a Covenant of *Areivut* – mutual obligations – which was different than the Covenant at Sinai, which represented personal obligations. The Kli Yakar further states that *Areivut* means shared consequences and explains that in rabbinic literature the word *Araiv* connotes a co-signor on a loan. "Any co-signor who sees the borrower wasting his money, he will rebuke him for fear lest he be forced to pay in his place." Therefore this new Covenant utilized the idea of shared consequences to reinforce the Covenant of Sinai, ensuring that the ancient Israelites understood the shared consequences of ignoring the rules of their society.

[RED's note: *Areivut* also applies to modern scenarios. If a Jewish neighbor drives his car on Shabbat it will affect God's judgment of all of us collectively. Hence I should attempt to influence him positively in his involvement in the mitzvah world. There is also a concept of Global *Areivut* in which all people of the world could be held responsible and suffer consequences if a rogue leader or nation develops dangerous weaponry and threatens to use it on other

nations, evidenced by the posturing of Iran in the world arena.]

3. In 30:2 the Torah says, "You shall return to Hashem, your God." The Chidah wrote that the letters of the word **וְשָׁבְתָה**, Veshavta, are the same letters as the word VeShabbat. This teaches us that one cannot repent without total observance of Shabbat, which is equal to all the mitzvot of the Torah. If a person strengthens himself in Shabbat observance, then his Teshuvah will be readily accepted because Shemirat Shabbat shows one's faith in his Creator. It is for this reason that our Sages say that if one observes Shabbat, which proclaims his faith in Hashem, he is forgiven even for the sin of idolatry (Shabbat 118b).

4. The primary theme of the sidrah of Nitzavim is Teshuvah, repentance. The concept of repentance is mentioned seven times in today's reading. We are to view this concept as a tremendous act of kindness on God's part. Imagine a person going in front of a human judge for some sin/crime that he committed. The sinner expresses remorse and promises not to sin again. Would the human judge be so quick to exonerate the sinner and give him a clean slate? Yet Hashem does exactly that when dealing with us sinners. The prophet Samuel would travel the land of Israel throughout the year and would return home at the end of the year. Rav Soloveitchik said that the concept of repentance is that of a cycle. Just as Samuel, when he took the first steps from his house to start his journey, was also beginning his return home, so too an individual, even when he sins, can never move away from Hashem, since at the same time, he starts on the road to do penitence. For some the circle is larger than others, but we each have that spark of Jewish identity (the Pintele Yid) that keeps us attached to God. We all return home at the end of the journey.

HAFTORAH

(p. 883 Hz) (p. 1145 S) (p. 919 Hi) (p. 1202 AS)

ISAIAH יְשַׁעְיָהוּ 61:10

This week's haftorah marks the climax of a seven week series of reflection on Jewish redemption. In this final presentation Hashem announces His personal return to the Jewish people. Now that every other dimension of redemption is in place, the time has finally arrived for Hashem to rest His Divine Presence amongst His people. Eretz Yisrael has been revived, Yerushalayim has been rebuilt, the exiles have returned en masse, but the ultimate objective has yet to be seen. In response to this, the prophet Yeshayah quotes the Jewish people saying, "I will be gladdened by Hashem, My soul will rejoice over my God" (61,10). Chazal in Yalkut Shimoni view the Jewish people's response to be specifically related to the return of Hashem to Yerushalayim. The Jewish people respond to all the magnificent prophecies of their glorious future and proclaim that their true source of happiness is but one, the return of Hashem to His beloved people. They sorely long for the privilege of sensing the presence of Hashem amongst them and feeling the closeness and love He has for His people. They resolve that they will be gladdened and happy only through His return to them.

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT NITZAVIM 5778  
by Rabbi Edward Davis, Rabbi Emeritus

- I. From the Text
  1. In the very first verse of the parsha Moshe tells the people "you are standing this day..." (29:9). Which day was it? What event occurred that day and what was the calendar date?
  2. Who were the strangers – the Geirim – who were "in the midst of your camp" when the Jewish people entered into this new Covenant? (29:10)
  3. "You know how we dwelt in Egypt" (29:15). Who of this generation would have firsthand memory of being in Egypt?
  4. What will be the punishment for Bnei Yisrael for disobedience of the Torah? (29:27)
  5. What should be our motive in observing the Torah? (30:20)
- II. From Rashi
  6. Who were the converts to whom Moshe gave the jobs of woodchoppers and water carriers? (29:10)
  7. What is the responsibility of the Jewish people when sins are committed by Jews in public and in secret? (29:28)
  8. At what point in time do Bnei Yisrael have responsibility one for the other? (Areivut) (29:28)
  9. What would our responsibility be to the Torah if it were located in Heaven (and not on earth)? (30:12)
  10. What should we learn from the Heaven and Earth to motivate us in observing God's will? (30:19)
- III. From the Rabbis
  11. What do we learn from the way Hashem destroyed Sodom? (Seforno 29:22)
  12. At what point in time did Bnei Yisrael open their hearts to love Hashem with all their heart and soul? (Ramban 30:6)
  13. What are the two main features of repentance? (Seforno and Ramban 30:14)
- IV. From the Haftarah
  14. Isaiah said that Hashem will call Yerushalayim, Zion with a new name (62:2). What was this new name? (62:4)
- V. Relationships
  - a) Avraham – Moav
  - b) Yitzchak – Amalek
  - c) Lot – Yishmael
  - d) Midian – Avraham
  - e) Zevulun – Orde

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT NITZAVIM 5778

1. The particular day was the day of Moshe's death, the 7<sup>th</sup> of Adar.
2. The strangers were the non-Jewish element, the Eirev Rav, that accompanied the Jews out of Egypt.
3. The women, the tribe of Levi, Calev, and Yehoshua, and those between the ages of 60 and 80.
4. Bnei Yisrael would be exiled out of Eretz Yisrael and dispersed among the nations.
5. To love Hashem.
6. Canaanites who were not so sincere in their conversion.
7. Bnei Yisrael are responsible to deal with sins committed in public. (Those committed in secret are in the hands of God.)
8. Once the people crossed the Jordan River then they are responsible for each other.
9. We would be required to scale the Heavens to study the Torah there.
10. Just as the Heaven and Earth do not change their ways and perform God's will with no benefit of reward, so should we be consistent in performing God's will.
11. It will be evident by the catastrophe that it was not an accident, but an act of Hashem.
12. It hasn't happened yet. It will happen only in the days of Mashiach.
13. Repentance is defined by sincere regret in the heart, and confession by word of mouth.
14. Cheftzi-Bah, My desire is in it (meaning God desires in the city of Yerushalayim).

Relationships:

- a) Great-uncle Avraham
- b) Great-uncle Yitzchak
- c) First cousins
- d) Father Avraham
- e) Uncle Zevulun