

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHIOT NITZAVIM-VAYELECH · 25 ELUL 5770 · SEP. 4, 2010 · VOL. 17 NO. 49

PARSHA INSIGHTS

How's YOUR STANDING?

"You are standing today, all of you, before G-d." (29:9)

Fearing G-d is out of fashion right now. It's acceptable to be in awe of His Majesty, to sit on the top of a mountain and commune with Beyond. But fearing? Come on, G-d's a nice G-d. He won't really punish me for speaking *lashon hara* (slander) or for adjusting my income tax a little. All that punishment stuff is really for kids anyway. Why do I need something so crass as fear when I have awe?

There can be no true awe without real fear.

The essence of fearing G-d is to accustom ourselves to be aware that He is watching us all the time; that He knows what we are thinking; that He sees every move we make every move, that we don't make but would like to.

If there is a time in the day when we visualize standing in front of the Creator more than any other, it is during the *Amida* prayer that we say three times daily. (*Amida*, quite literally means, "standing.") If there is a day in the year when we try to visualize standing in front of the Creator more than any other, it is Rosh Hashana.

Rosh Hashana, a day that should strike fear into our hearts — "who will live, and who will die who by

water, and who by fire." Who in a bus, and who in a restaurant.

And yet are we really frightened about what sort of year this will be for us? I don't think so.

Why not?

A true story:

Jerusalem has its fair share of parking problems for which one fellow had his own unique solution. After driving round the block a couple of times, he would pull up to a curb with red stripes. Getting out of the car, he would reach for his trusty can of black mat spray-paint, and proceed to black out the red stripes the entire length of his car.

How much of the time do we do just that in our relationship with G-d? How much of the time do we try to alter the rules to suit ourselves and our own ideas of right and wrong?

Rosh Hashana is a time to come clean, to clean off the spray paint from the sidewalks of our lives.

Before we get more than a ticket.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

© 2010 Ohr Somayach Institutions - All rights reserved • This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Nitzavim

On the last day of his life, Moshe gathers all the people, young and old, lowly and exalted, men and women, in a final initiation. The covenant includes not only those who are present, but even those generations yet unborn. Moshe admonishes the people again to be extremely vigilant against idol worship because, in spite of having witnessed the abominations of Egypt, there will always be the temptation to experiment with foreign philosophies as a pretext for immorality. Moshe describes the desolation of the Land of Israel which will result from failure to heed G-d's *mitzvot*. Descendants of that generation and foreigners alike will remark on the singular desolation of the Land and its apparent inability to be sown or to produce crops. The conclusion will be apparent to all — the Jewish People have forsaken the One who protects them in favor of powerless idols. Moshe promises, however, that the people will eventually repent after both the blessings and the curses have been fulfilled. However assimilated they will have become among the nations, eventually G-d will bring them back to *Eretz Yisrael*. Moshe tells the people to remember that fulfilling the Torah is not an impossibility; rather it's within the grasp of every Jew. The *parsha* dramatically concludes with Moshe comparing the Jewish People's choice to follow the Torah to a choice between life and death. Moshe exhorts the people to choose life.

Vayelech

On the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent bidding farewell to his people, encouraging them to "keep the faith." Moshe tells them that whether he is among them or not, G-d is with them. He summons Yehoshua, and, in front of all the people, exhorts him to be strong and courageous as leader of the Jewish People. Thus, he strengthens Yehoshua's status. Moshe teaches the mitzvah of *hakhel*: Every seven years on the first of the intermediate days of Succot, the entire nation, including small children, is to gather at the Temple to hear the king read from the Book of Devarim. The sections read deal with faithfulness to G-d, the covenant and reward and punishment. G-d tells Moshe that his end is near, and he should summon Yehoshua to stand with him in the *Mishkan*, where G-d will teach Yehoshua. G-d tells Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land the people will be unfaithful and worship other gods. G-d will then completely "hide His face," so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at the mercy of fate, hunted by all. G-d instructs Moshe and Yehoshua to write down a song — *Ha'azinu* — which will serve as "witness" against the Jewish People when they sin. Moshe records the song in writing and teaches it to *Bnei Yisrael*. Moshe completes his transcription of the Torah and instructs the *levi'im* to place it to the side of the Holy Ark, so that no one will ever write a new Torah Scroll different from the original, for there will always be a reference copy.

ISRAEL Forever

LAST SHABBAT OF THE YEAR

On the last Shabbat of the year 5770 we will be reading about the last day of the life of our beloved teacher Moshe.

In the second of the two Torah chapters which will be read in synagogues throughout the world, Moshe takes leave of the people he has led for forty trying years. He offers them moving words of encouragement that they will succeed in conquering the nations that stand in the

way of their inheriting the land promised to their ancestors.

At a time when so many obstacles face the Jewish People in safely living in the land to which they have returned after such a long exile, it is comforting to reflect upon the total fulfillment of Moshe's prophecy which we will eventually deserve – the promise of Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

AYELET HASHACHAR – TALE OF A NAME

In the eastern part of Upper Galilee is Kibbutz Ayelet Hashachar. The story goes that this name of the "morning star" became the name of the kibbutz because its founders had no rooster. Its members only knew when to rise for work by hearing the night guard call out that the morning star had appeared.



After several years they decided to find a name for their community. All night long they sat and considered names which they then rejected as being unfit. Then came the cry of the guard to wake up for work because the morning star had appeared. At that moment they decided to call their kibbutz Ayelet Hashachar.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Nitzavim

1. Why did Moshe gather the Jewish People together on the day of his death?
2. Who are the wood-cutters and water-drawers mentioned in verse 29:10?
3. How do two parties “pass” into a covenant?
4. What is the connection between the verse “*Atem nitzavim*” and the curses in the previous parsha?
5. Why can't G-d disassociate himself from the Jewish People?
6. How many curses were listed in *Parshat Ki Tavo*?
7. Which two leaders followed Moshe's example and assembled the people at the end of their rule?
8. With whom did Moshe make the covenant and oath?
9. Why did the Jewish People see only idols of wood and stone in Egypt?
10. What is meant by the punishment of “adding drunkenness to thirst” (29:18)?

Vayelech

11. How old was Moshe when he died?

12. Why was Moshe unable “to go out and come in” (31:2)?
13. What happened to Moshe's Torah knowledge on the day of his death?
14. How did Moshe foresee the relationship between Yehoshua and the Elders?
15. What did G-d tell Yehoshua concerning his relationship with the Elders?
16. How often does the *hakhel* (assembly of the Jewish People) take place?
17. Why does the Torah call the year of the *hakhel* the “*shemita* year”?
18. What sections of the Torah does the king read at the *hakhel*?
19. In what physical location does the king read at the *hakhel*?
20. Why were the men commanded to come to the gathering?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

Nitzavim

1. 29:9 - To initiate them into the covenant with G-d.
2. 29:10 - Canaanites who came to join the Jewish People.
3. 29:11 - The two parties place objects in two parallel lines and pass between them.
4. 29:12 - The Jewish People asked, “Who can survive such curses?” Moshe comforted them, saying, “You've done a lot to anger G-d, and yet — ‘*Atem nitzavim*’ — G-d didn't destroy you ...you're still standing before Him.”
5. 29:12 - Because He told them He wouldn't and because He swore to the Avot (Patriarchs) that the Jewish People would always remain His nation.
6. 29:12 - Ninety-eight.
7. 29:12 - Yehoshua and Shmuel.
8. 29:14 - With the people standing before him and all future generations.
9. 29:16 - Because these were exposed openly. The idols of gold and silver, however, were locked away by their owners for fear of theft.
10. 29:18 - Even unintentional sins will be considered by G-d as if they were committed intentionally.

“Drunkenness” refers to sins committed unintentionally. “Thirst” refers to sins committed intentionally.

Vayelech

11. 31:2 - Exactly 120.
12. 31:2 - G-d did not let him because the power of leadership was being transferred to Yehoshua.
13. 31:2 - The well-springs of knowledge were closed up for him.
14. 31:7 - He foresaw that they would work in partnership.
15. 31:7 - That he alone would be the leader — for there can only be one leader in each generation.
16. 31:10 - Once every seven years, in the first year of the new *shemita* period.
17. 31:10 - Because the laws of *shemita* still applied to the harvest.
18. 31:11 - From Devarim: 1:1-6:9; 11:13-21; and 14:22-28:69.
19. 31:11 - On a wooden platform erected in the *azara*.
20. 31:12 - In order to learn.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

- Buying a red heifer for ritual use from a heathen
- The exemplary honoring of a father by a heathen
- The song of the cows transporting the Holy Ark
- When the sun stood still for the sake of Israel
- Being alone with a heathen in a house or on the road
- The cleverness of Rabbi Akiva's disciples
- Serving as midwife or nursing mother for heathens or being served by them in such manner
- Circumcision of a non-Jew or by a non-Jew
- Medical service from a heathen
- When martyrdom is required
- Which conditions are considered a danger to life and warrant violation of Shabbat
- Some illnesses and their cures
- Haircuts of a heathen or by a heathen
- Wine and foods of a heathen

THE SILENT SUN

“**A**nd the sun was still and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.” (Yehoshua 10:13)

Thus is described the great miracle of victory achieved by Yehoshua over a powerful coalition of five kings, a miracle characterized as “there was no day like that before it or after it, that G-d hearkened to the voice of man.” (Ibid. 10:14)

When those kings declared war on the inhabitants of Givon for making an alliance with the invading Israelite army, Yehoshua came to their rescue. His triumph over such a superior force was achieved through Heavenly intervention which included the raining down of great stones upon them.

But in order to complete his annihilation of these dangerous enemies Yehoshua needed more time before nightfall. He therefore commanded the sun to stand still and it did indeed stand in the middle of the sky for about a whole day.

An interesting aspect of this miracle that sent shock waves throughout the universe is the report that Yehoshua spoke to G-d and that the sun was still. Rashi, in his commentary on our gemara, points out that the stillness of the sun refers to the interruption of the song of praise to G-d which it sings while in motion. It was therefore necessary for Yehoshua, who initiated that interruption, to take its place in the above-mentioned “speaking to G-d” as his human song of praise.

• Avoda Zara 25a

What the SAGES Say

“Just as the sun stood still for Yehoshua so too did it stand still for Moshe and for Nakdimon ben Gurion” (Mesechta Taanit 20a).

• Tosefta - Avoda Zara 25a

AVAILABLE AT JEWISH BOOKSTORES & WWW.OHR.EDU

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY PRESENTS

THE WASSERMAN **TALMUDIGEST** SERIES

A tantalizing gateway to the incomparable wealth of intellect and guidance contained in the Talmud

NOW AVAILABLE !

VOLUME ONE - THE COGUT EDITION
VOLUME TWO - THE WINKLER EDITION

CLOTHES OF THE DECEASED

From: Leah and Faigie

*Dear Rabbi,
I heard there's a concept not to wear clothing of someone who has passed away. Does this always apply, and to what types of clothing?*

Dear Leah and Faigie,

Jews are allowed to wear the clothing of a deceased person, but there has arisen a widespread custom — based on the writings of Rabbi Yehuda HaChassid — to avoid wearing the shoes of the deceased.

Some apply this custom only to shoes worn at the time of death, while others apply it to any of the deceased's shoes that he wore. If he never wore them others may wear them.

Your question reminds me of a story:

Some years ago Rabbi Aharon Leib Steinman visited the United States. His travels brought him to the home of Rabbi Malkiel Kotler in Lakewood, New Jersey, where his attention was drawn to a tattered pair of shoes on display. "What are these?" he asked.

Rabbi Kotler answered with the following story: "As

you know, my great-grandfather, Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer, was Dean of the great Yeshiva in Slutzk. When the threat of World War I loomed overhead, all the students were sent home. One student, upon arriving home, was told by his mother: 'I didn't send you all the way to Slutzk to learn Torah for you to come home!' Not able get a train because of poverty and war, the young man walked the 400 kilometers back to the yeshiva. When he arrived, my great-grandfather Rabbi Meltzer was so impressed with this young man for having walked so far, he kept his shoes as a symbol of self-sacrifice for the study of Torah."

Rabbi Steinman listened, then spoke: "But surely," he said, "the young man from WWI days is no longer living. Isn't it time to dispose of his shoes?"

"Not living?" Rabbi Kotler declared. "He is living. That young man was none other than Rabbi Elazar Menachem Shach!"

(Rabbi Shach, *zatzal*, has since passed away at the age of 107.)

Sources:

- *Iggrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah 3:133*
- *Gesher Hachaim page 58*
- *Yabia Omer 3:5*

NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR WWW.OHR.EDU

FROM THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY

QUESTION MARKET

VOLUME ONE - THE KLEIN EDITION

Relevant, informative, and thought-provoking answers to contemporary questions on Jewish law, customs, and ethics



Days of Awe

The Ohr Somayach Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Handbook

Get your free download at www.ohr.edu/roshbook/

WEDDING WOES

Question: I am sometimes invited to the wedding of a friend whose standard of kashrut observance is not quite up to my own and whose idea of mixed seating at the meal makes it very difficult for me to participate in the dinner. Mentioning my reservations can seriously damage our relations. What is the right thing to do?

Answer: You certainly have no obligation to compromise your standards of religious observance but you must be extremely careful in how you handle this matter. The best way is to inform your friend that you have a conflict obligation that evening but that you will share his *simcha* by attending the *chupah* or coming towards the end of the evening to dance with him and the others.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

KEEPING A PROMISE

When he was handed an invitation to the wedding of a young man, Rabbi Aryeh Levin, the famed *tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, did not recognize the prospective *chatan*. He nevertheless conversed with him about his wedding plans. In the course of their conversation he discovered that the *kallah's* parents were boycotting the wedding because of some differences between them and the *chatan's* parents. This caused Rabbi Levin to have reservations about participating in such a wedding, so he said that "he would attend if he could."

"But you once promised to be at my wedding," the inviter protested.

He then went on to remind the rabbi, who was famous

for his visits to Jews imprisoned by the British Mandate forces, of the time he visited him when he was in the prison "death row" because of anti-British activity. He encouraged him by telling him that he would not be executed, leaving him with the promise that he would even someday dance at his wedding.

Rabbi Levin thereupon said he would keep his promise but asked that the wedding be postponed in order to give him time to make peace between the young man's parents and those of his *kallah*. The happy ending was that the wedding eventually took place with both sets of parents there along with the holy man who kept his promise.

THE JEWISH LEARNING LIBRARY IS PROUD TO PRESENT

THE ESSENTIAL MALBIM

THE KOHN FAMILY EDITION

VOLUME ONE - FLASHES OF INSIGHT ON BEREISHET/GENESIS

COMING SOON! VOLUME TWO - SHEMOS!

PUBLISHED BY ARTSCROLL / MESORAH

NOW AVAILABLE AT YOUR JEWISH BOOKSTORE OR WWW.OHR.EDU