

Nitzavim 2016

1.

Choosing proper path and not getting overly confident

“See – I have placed before you today the life and the good etc. and you shall choose life.” (30, 16)

"ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב וכו' ובחרת חיים."

Why does the pasuk say today? Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (Drash Moshe page 164) explains that perhaps the intent of the pasuk is as follows; every single day there are two potential paths that we can choose. Sometimes we don't conduct our lives the way we should. If we were on an improper path then we must choose a proper path. The second path is as follows; even if we were on the correct path, we must nevertheless not assume that we will continue on this path in the future. We mustn't get overly confident. Many times we get into bad habits without even realizing the awful act/s that we are doing. Therefore the pasuk specifies today. Meaning, we must immediately realize the situation that we are in.

The Mishna in Avos (perek beis) instructs us not to believe in ourselves until the day we die (אל תאמן בעצמך עד יום מותך). We shouldn't think that we are immune to sinning. The Gemara in Berachos (29a) relates that Yochanan served as a Kohen Gadol for eighty years and then became a heretic. (יוחנן כהן גדול שמש בכהונה גדולה שמנים שנה ולבסוף נעשה צדוקי.)

2.

Reward for learning is logic

“Rather, the matter is very near to you – in your mouth and in your heart – to perform.” (30, 14)

"כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיך ובלבבך לעשתו."

The Bal Haturim explains that the Torah is life for those who enunciate it. The pasuk in Mishlay (4, 22) states “for they are life for those who find them.” (See also the Gemara in Eruvin (54a).) There is an important concept of verbally enunciating the Torah that one learns. The Bal Haturim continues and says that the reward for learning is logic (אמר רבא אגרא דשמעתא סברא) as stated in mesechas Berachos (6b). What is the simple explanation of this Gemara? The simple interpretation of the reward one will receive for learning is reward in the next world. **Rashi explains that the reward one receives for participating in a Torah discussion is commensurate with the effort and concentration that he exerts to understand the rationale of the matter under discussion. The Beneyahu explains** the Gemara is referring to reward in this world. The reward for learning will definitely be granted in the next world. The chiddush (insight) of this Gemara is **that there is an additional reward other than reward in the next world that is granted; happiness. This happiness is acquired via logic.** One who logically and insightfully asks questions and provides answers will certainly be joyful. (זה איירי על שכר עולם הזה) והוא כי שכר הלימוד עצמו ודאי הוא בעולם הבא. אך בעולם הזה איכא שכר שהיא השמחה שיש לאדם בתורה דכתיב "פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב." אך עיקר השמחה תהיה לאדם על ידי הסברא שהוא מסביר מדעתו בשמעתתא והם חידושי תורה בקושיות (ותירוצים שמחדש, ובטעמים ודמיונות שעושה בשמעתתא, כל חידושים אלו הם בכלל סברא. Similarly, the Gemara in

Kiddushin (39b) quotes Rebbe Yaakov who says that ‘reward for performing mitzvos is not granted in this world (שכר מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא).’ Nevertheless, the Yalkut mefarshim quotes the Yabetz who explains that Torah is an exception as stated in the beginning of mesechas Paya. The logic itself is the reward. There is no greater pleasure than fully understanding what one has learned and coming out with a conclusion. The Rif (on the Ein Yaakov) also says that one who toils to understand the material being learnt will be rewarded immediately. The Gemara in Baba Metzia (33a) states that the highest level of learning is learning Gemara. The Toras Chaim explains that the most logic is needed to learn Gemara properly. The following question was posed to Rabbi Yaakov (shut Min Hashamayim siman 32); is it permissible to write a chiddush on chol hamoad in order that it will not be forgotten. The Gemara in mesechas Moad Katan discusses a דבר האבד, a loss. It is permissible to work on chol hamoad in order to prevent oneself from a financial loss. The same applies to chidushei Torah. It will be considered a big loss if it isn’t written down. Since it is permissible to work for money, then surely it is permissible to write down these gems of Torah.