

Nitzavim-Vayeilech 2013

1.

A new sinless generation

Nachlas Tzvi page 513

“You are standing today before Hashem your God” (29, 9)

"אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני יקוק אלהיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם כל איש ישראל."

Is it only today that the Jews are standing before Hashem? Hashem occupies the whole world? When the Jews sin they are not in front of Hashem, rather they are behind Him. The generation who crossed the Jordan River to enter Israel is the generation after the desert generation (See Rashi in Parsha Chukas). Therefore, ‘today’ (היום) the Jews who did not sin in the desert are standing before (in front of) Hashem. Conversely, the midbar (desert) generation who sinned was not standing before Hashem.

2.

Growth after death

Nachlas Tzvi page 520

“Moshe went (וילך) and spoke these words to all of Israel” (31, 1)

"וילך משה וידבר את הדברים האלה אל כל ישראל."

Why is this parsha the only parsha in the whole Torah where the word ‘went’ is used to start the parsha? The Gemara in Yevamos (97a) quotes Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai who says that when one utters a Halacha in the name of a talmud chacham who is dead; his lips are moving in his grave. אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי כל תלמיד חכם שאומרים דבר שמועה מפיו בעולם הזה, שפתותיו (דובבות בקבר). (See Taklin Chadotin and Korban Ada on yerushalmi shekalim.) The Nachlas Tzvi explains that angels are called standing while humans are called moving (see Zechariah (3, 7)). The reason for this is that angels are unable to grow, unlike humans who are able to. Consequently, this enables us to reach higher levels. This obtainment of loftier levels can be achieved while we are still alive. However, once we die, we are unable to continue to grow. There is an exception to this rule of the impossibility of growing once dead. One who has students or one who has created chiddushim (new Torah insights) is still able to grow. The reason for this is as follows; whoever quotes this dead talmid chacham make his lips move as though he is still alive and learning. This thereby enables him to continue to grow. Now we can understand why the Torah uses the word ‘went’ on the day of Moshe’s death. The Torah is alluding to the concept that after his death he will not be like an angel who is standing; rather he will still be growing and moving to higher levels.

The Gra (even Shalomo) and Rabbi Uri Pilichowski (Maximizing your time chapter five) explain that **one who doesn’t increase spiritually will almost always decrease spiritually**. This can be

likened to an escalator going the wrong way; one who isn't going up will automatically descend. This is also the explanation of the Gemara in Shabbos (21b); we only go up in holiness, not down. (מעלין בקדש ואין מורידין.)

See Artscroll intro to sefer Daniel pages xxxi-xxxii. Human beings who rise above circumstances and challenges to serve Hashem are truly higher than angels who have no free will, no evil inclination, and no existence other than that of carrying out the will of God. Man is created with potential that can be realized only through struggle and effort. Angels never change. Humans are similar to angels in several ways however. The Gemara in Chagiga (16a) relates that both angels and humans have knowledge, speak in Hebrew and walk in an erect position.

The Parparos L'torah (Berashis page 89) asks **why the parsha is named Chayai Sarah after the fact that the whole parsha is about her death!?** (You can ask the same kasha (question) about parshas Vayechi, when the whole parsha is about Yaakov's death?) The answer is **the Gemara in Berachos (18) which states, that even when Tzaddikim are dead they are called alive.**

What does the Gemara mean when it says 'they are still alive'; when in reality they are not alive? The Mishna in Avos (perek two) says 'מרבח תורה תרבה חיים' **'the more Torah a person has the more life he has'.**

Similarly, in the Biography of Reb Chaim Volozhin (page 61): It says that Torah is comparable to a person who is in a fast moving river with strong rapids. He is approaching a waterfall and just before falling grabs onto a branch. (Or the Torah is analogous to **a person who falls off a cliff and grasps a branch sticking out of the cliff.**) **He will surely hold onto that branch for his life. The reason for this is obvious; it is because his life depends on him holding onto this branch. We need to realize that the Torah is our life and that our life depends upon this. We need to hold on to Torah in the same way; it's a tree of life** as it says (Mishlay 3, 18) "it is a tree of life for those that hold onto it." ("עץ חיים היא למחזיקים בה.")

See the Splendor of the Maggid (page 45), The Gemara in Shabbos (153a) relates that before Rav died he said to his students give me a warm eulogy for I will be standing there (אחים בהספידא (דהתם קאימנא). The Eitz Yosef explains Rav's directive. Throughout life, one's neshamah grows spiritually as mitzvos are done or as Torah is learned. When one passes away, that escalation stops. Thus, the neshamah remains standing at whatever level he has achieved. However, if a person's memory continues to be an inspiration to others, inspiring them to perform mitzvos, then the soul of the deceased continues to grow spiritually, corresponding to the spiritual growth his example has brought about in others. Rav instructed his students to deliver warm eulogies so that others would learn from him; then his neshamah could continue to grow spiritually.

The Gemara in Rosh Hashana (32b) relates that the angels asked Hashem why isn't hallel said on Rosh Hashana? Hashem answered 'is it possible that when the book of life and death are open that you can sing a shira (song)?' The simple interpretation of this is; Hashem is deciding who will live and who will die. However, now we see that this could also mean that the books of the living and the books of the dead are open; meaning the dead are being judged as well. So the obvious question is; it's understandable that when the book of the living is open we shouldn't be sinning because we are being judged about whether we will live or die. What's the reason for not sinning because the book of the dead is open; if they are dead already then they've been judged?

Even after death, a person can be moving from level to another level, based on the actions they performed in this world! The amount of Torah that we leave over can elevate our neshamos (souls) after our death! On the other hand as well, sadly, we can be move to a lower lever based on terrible actions we executed while alive that are still having negative effects in the world. After one dies he can still have an effect on those who are still living either for good or bad. For example, if someone teaches people how to steal without getting caught, then even after he dies, as long as people are applying the lessons he taught them then he is responsible and is receiving sins for every item that these people steal. So too, conversely, if a person taught Torah and affected people in a positive way, bringing them closer to Torah and mitzvos, then he is having a positive effect on the world even after this person dies.

This is analogous to the classic Domino effect. Dominos are fascinating to watch. One of the most interesting aspects about dominos is that by merely pushing one domino down many dominoes fall. Sometimes thousands of dominos fall down all because of one domino. The nimshal (lesson) is that we are capable of having a major effect on others. Sometimes we do not even realize the tremendous impact and effect that we have on others.

This is additionally analogous to a person throwing a rock in the water; there will subsequently be many ripples in the water.

This is why the Gemara says even when tzaddikim are dead they are called alive and additionally why our parsha is called Chayai Sarah. Since these tzaddikim, and Sarah, preformed so many Mitzvos and had such a positive ripple effect on this world; it's considered as if they are still alive!!

See Vayeishev 2015