

Nitzavim-Vayeilech 2017

1.

Arvus thru institutions

“The hidden (sins) are for Jews, our God, but the revealed (sins) are for us and our children forever, to carry out all the words of his Torah.” (29, 28)

"הנסתרת ליקוק אלהינו והנגלת לנו ולבנינו עד עולם לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת."

Rashi explains that this pasuk teaches us the concept that we are responsible for one another. The Rosh (Berachos 20) explains the reasoning behind the halacha when someone is already yotzei (has fulfilled his obligation), nevertheless he is still able to motzei (fulfill) someone else. (אף על פי שיוצא מוציא) Since every Jew is responsible for other Jews, therefore when another Jew didn't fulfill his obligation it is considered as if the Jew who already fulfilled his obligation didn't fulfill his obligation. We are also obligated to prevent others from transgressing sins (assuming they will heed our rebuke). If we don't, then it is considered as if we performed that sin as stated in mesechas Shabbos (54b). Just like we should prevent our friend from entering into a bad business deal, so too, we must prevent our friend from making a bad spiritual decision. We must therefore support Torah institutions. Due to these institutions, we become aware of what is permissible and what is prohibited. The special dots on top of the word ולבנינו emphasize its importance: our responsibility for others. This is similar to underlining a word.

2.

New Torah vs old Torah

“So now, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the children of Israel, place it in their mouth, so that this song shall be for Me a witness against the children of Israel.” (31, 19)

"ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת ולמדה את בני ישראל שימה בפיהם למען תהיה לי השירה הזאת לעד בבני ישראל."

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (21b) quotes Rava who says that even though ones father bequeathed a sefer Torah for his son, nevertheless it is a mitzvah for the son to write his own Torah. The Rambam and Shulchan Aruch pasken (hold) like this as well. What is the explanation of this halacha? Why isn't the Torah that his father left enough? The Chinuch (mitzvah 613) explains that many times the way we prepare will affect the way we act. If we put more preparation into a mitzvah then we will be more likely to perform that mitzvah better. Hashem therefore wanted everyone to have his own sefer Torah. Hashem didn't want them to have to walk somewhere in order to get a Torah. Rather, Hashem wants everyone to have his own Torah readily available. Hashem wants us to write our own Torah in order that there will be many Sifrei Torah among us. We will then be able to lend them out to others. Another reason is in order that we will be able to learn from

new sefarim. **Inherited Sifrei Torah are often old and worn. There is a concern that someone who learns out of such sefarim will lose his enthusiasm.** The Chinuch concludes by telling his son that even though the essential biblical obligation pertains only to a Sefer Torah, there is no doubt that it extends, also to other sefarim that were composed in explanation of the Torah, such as Medrash, Gemara etc. It is thus incumbent upon every person to produce copies of them, according to his ability. Rebbi Akiva Eiger writes in his introduction to use the best sefarim. **He requested that his son publish his responsa on fine paper, using high quality ink and an attractive font because ‘the spirit is excited, the intellect expands, and one becomes more focused when studying from an attractive and beautiful book; and the opposite is also true etc.’**

Rabbi Yaakov Nyman (Darchei mussar pages 245-246) offers another answer. We mustn't learn Torah and perform mitzvos habitually. The Sifri (parshas Va'eschanan 6, 6) relates that the Torah should be new upon us and not like something that is old. The words of Torah should be new to us even if we have been learning for years. This will cause us to love and appreciate the mitzvos more, in addition to making the Torah learning more interesting. The Torah is alluding to this point. **Just as we are obligated to write a new Torah, so too, we must approach Torah learning as new and not habitual.**

Why do we say in Shemonah Esrei ‘the God of Avraham, the God of Yitzchak and the God of Yaakov’? Why don't we succinctly say the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov? Every one of the avos specialized in a certain aspect of avodas Hashem. Avraham taught Yitzchak a lot about emunah. Avraham's specialty was chesed (kindness). Yitzchak however wasn't satisfied. He decided that gevurah (strength) was necessary. Yaakov specialized in emes (truth). Hashem name is therefore played by each of the avos in order to allude to their individuality. Each one of them had newness in their way of serving Hashem. Even though we need newness, we also need oldness. Meaning, mesorah (tradition): from father to son and Rabbi to talmid (student). The Chafetz Chaim once spoke at a gathering of Rabbeim in Vilna. He said if one wants to know if someone likes his job look at his child. If his father taught his son his profession, then it is know that he likes his job. **Whether we teach our children Torah and mitzvos or not is an indicator as to how much we love Torah and mitzvos.**

3.

Preparation

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

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

Rabbi Moshe Yosef Scheinerman (Ohel Moshe chalek beis page 19) explains that the custom is that we lained the end of the Torah during the time of the yamin noraem (days of awe). Parshas Nitzavim is lained when we say selichos. The word נצבים means standing. The simple explanation of standing means to physically stand. However a deeper

explanation can mean to prepare (see Eicah 3, 12, Shemos 19, 17). **We must spiritually prepare for Rosh Hashana.**

In selichos we say 'כדלים וכרשים דפקנו דלתיך.' 'we are like poor people knocking on your door.' Rav Naftali Trup explained that when a poor person just needs a little more money he won't knock on someone's door. He will just cough or something similar. However **a poor person who has absolutely nothing will surely knock on someone's door. This poor person who isn't wearing shoes or clothing and is starving will shout out 'save me.'** Chazal tells us the beginning of the year is the root for the rest of the year. If we have success in the beginning of the year then we will surely have successes during the rest of the year. **We must feel like this poor person. We must feel the desperateness of our situation. We should daven intently and ask Hashem to save us.**