

BS"D

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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON NITZAVIM VAYELECH - 5762

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Parashah Talk

Parshas Vayeilech

Excerpt from DARASH MOSHE, BY RABBI MOSHE FEINSTEIN

[Moses said] "I am one hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in, and G-d has said to me, "You shall not go over this Jordan" " (Deuteronomy 31:2)

The Rabbi of Gur said that by his one hundred and twentieth birthday Moses had reached the ultimate in spirituality and holiness that a human being can attain.

The only possibility for Moses to achieve any additional growth in spirituality would have been in the Holy Land, but inasmuch as he was denied entrance thereto, he could not progress any further. To Moses, a life without possibility for growth was not worth living, and when he realized the Divine decree restricting him from entering the Holy Land was irrevocable, he willingly accepted heath. To Moses, living meant growing. Without the possibility of both, living would be merely existing, and this was intolerable. Perhaps this is what the Talmud means when it says, "The wicked are considered dead even when they are living" (Berachos 18b).

Moses is referred to as Rabbeinu, our teacher, who taught us not only by his pronouncements, but also by the way he lived and died.

Unlike Moses, who had reached the ultimate heights possible for a human being, we all have abundant room to expand our growth. If we fail to do so and remain spiritually stagnant, we are willingly accepting a status which we should reject even if it were forced upon us. The fact that one moves about, metabolizes, and even communicates with others does not yet constitute "living," and can be understood as a kind of animated existence.

Few people would resign themselves to animated existence. As proud human beings, we aspire to something more, to living. The Torah concept of living is that which Moses taught us.

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RABBI ZVI SOBOLOFSKY

TESHUVA – OPPORTUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

In Parshas Nitzavim (Devarim 30:15) we are presented with two options. We can choose to be good and thereby live or we can be bad which will bring death. The options that are given in Parshas Nitzavim resemble the choices given in Parshas Re'eh (Devarim 11: 26-28), but they differ in one respect. Though both Parshios present the choice between good and bad, the ramifications of our actions in each case are different. In Parshas Re'eh, the path of good is described as a blessing, whereas the path of evil is a curse. In Parshas Nitzavim, good is synonymous with life itself, whereas evil does not bring a mere curse, but rather death. Why are the consequences of one's choices so much more severe in Parshas Nitzavim than in Parshas Re'eh? Immediately prior to the choices delineated in Parshas Nitzavim the mitzva of teshuva is given. Although teshuva is a wonderful gift, it carries with it an immense responsibility. One who fails to take advantage of the opportunity to do teshuva commits a terrible sin by

not appreciating the significance of this gift from Hashem. Prior to the introduction of teshuva, a life devoid of Torah was merely a cursed existence. Now that teshuva can be performed, if one still refuses to do so, actions are not only cursed but are synonymous with death. It is this awesome responsibility that accompanies teshuva that explains a difficult statement of the Rambam in Hilchis Teshuva. On Rosh Hashanah it is determined whether a person is righteous, wicked, or in the middle. A person is considered righteous if he has even one more merit than sin to his credit, and wicked if his sins outnumber his merits. Those whose merits and sins are equal are given that opportunity to repent between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The Rambam writes that one who does not repent at this time is automatically determined to be wicked. Why should the lack of repentance necessarily seal the person's fate? Perhaps he performed other mitzvos between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur that could tip the balance in his favor? Apparently the Rambam understands that the sin of not doing teshuva is of such magnitude, particularly at a time such as the Aseres Yemei Teshuva when teshuva is presented as a gift, that no merit can offset the consequences.

As we approach the period of time dedicated to teshuva, let us remember that teshuva is not only a gift, but a responsibility. May we merit to appreciate this wonderful opportunity that is presented to us.

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [[ryfrand@torah.org](mailto:ryfrand@torah.org)] To: [ravfrand@torah.org](mailto:ravfrand@torah.org) Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Nitzvim-Vayelech "RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Nitzavim-Vayelech -

Why Bring The Children To "Hakhel"?

We learn in Parshas Vayelech about the mitzvah of "Hakhel," whereby the entire nation gathered in Jerusalem once every seven years (at the conclusion of the Sabbatical year) for a communal reading of the Torah. The pasuk says, "Gather together the people -- the men, the women, and the small children..." [Devarim 31:12].

Rashi spells out the details of Hakhel, based on the Gemara [Chagiga 3a]: The men come to learn; the women (who in those days did not have the educational background to really learn the Torah) come to listen; and the children come to bring a reward to those who bring them. The simple reading of the Gemara is that there is in fact no inherent purpose for the children to come. The men can learn. The women can at least listen. But what are the kids coming for? They will not even listen properly.

In light of this, it is hard to understand the meaning of the Gemara when it says, "to give reward to those who bring them". What does this mean? If, in fact, there is no purpose to bring the children, then what reward should be granted to those who bring them? There is no mitzvah to bring a sack of potatoes!

The Nesivos answers this question very practically. All the Jews from throughout the Land of Israel came to Jerusalem for Hakhel. So who was left home to watch the kids? Where would they find baby sitters? Obviously, the adults had no choice but to bring the children. Since the children had to be brought anyway, the Torah commanded that they be brought, so that there would also be a mitzvah and the associated reward involved in bringing the children.

Reb Yerucham, as well as the Sefas Emes interpret this Gemara in a slightly different fashion. When the Gemara states that the children are brought "to grant reward to those who bring them", the intent is not that there is no inherent value in bringing children to Hakhel. In fact, there is something to be gained from bringing them even if they do not have the intellect to learn or the patience to listen. Merely being present at an event like Hakhel -- in an atmosphere permeated with holiness has an effect on the children, not necessarily immediately, but in years to come.

For example, the Gemara [Jerusalem Talmud: Yevamos] says that the mother of Rav Yoshua ben Chananya used to take his cradle and place it in the Beis Medrash, just so the baby should absorb the sound of Torah.

So too, explain both Reb Yerucham and the Sefas Emes, parents who make the effort to expose their children to positive experiences in life, despite the fact that the child ostensibly does not gain anything concrete from the experience at the time, will be rewarded. Merely making the effort to expose them to a positive environment will allow the parents to reap reward in the future.

I recently bought a book for my wife called, "A Day in the Life of Israel". Sixty of the best photographers in the world were assigned a city or an area in Israel and told to take photos on a given day, the best of which would appear in this book. I saw one photo of a newborn nursery in Bnei Brak. There is a picture of rows of little infants in plastic cribs lined up in the nursery. In one of the cribs, there is a picture book opened to pictures of Rav Shach, the Steipler Gaon, and the Chazon Ish. There in the cradle, in the hospital, pictures of Gedolim [great Torah luminaries] surround the baby. This book is not a religious book. It is a secular book. Nonetheless, the caption on this photo is "Education starts early in Israel".

This illustrates our explanation of the previously quoted Gemara in Chagiga. Even though the child's only care in the world at this point is when he is wet or hungry, somehow on a subconscious if not a conscious level, his environment has an effect on him. Parents who make the effort to put their children into a good environment -- even though at the time the efforts seem in vain -- will eventually receive reward, in the form of the development of spiritually developed children. This is what our Sages mean when they say, "to grant reward to those who bring them".

#### Now, Write For Yourselves This Song

The Ponevizer Rav (Rav Yosef Kahaneman 1886-1969) instituted a custom -- still in effect to this day -- whereby there are weeks of special learning for the public at large that take place on an annual basis within the confines of the Ponevizer Yeshiva. These weeks of special learning are known as a Yarchei Kallah.

Rav Shmuel Rosovsky once relayed the following insight, in the name of the Ponevizer Rav, at the first Yarchei Kallah following the Ponevizer Rav's passing. We are taught that before Yehoshua captured the city of Jericho he met an angel: "It happened when Yehoshua was in Jericho, that he raised his eyes and saw, and behold! -- A man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand. Yehoshua went toward him and said, 'Are you with us or with our enemies?' He said, 'No, for I am the commander of Hashem's legion; now I have come'." [Yehoshua 5:13-14].

This is an inexplicable dialogue. We do not understand Yehoshua's question and we do not understand the angel's answer. The Gemara [Megillah 3a] explains the dialogue. The angel told Yehoshua that because of the siege of Jericho, they failed to do two things. The previous night they neglected to offer the daily sacrifice of the evening and now they were neglecting the study of Torah. Yehoshua asked the angel for which of the two sins he was coming to chastise them. The angel responded "for the sin that you have done now" (neglect of Torah study).

The meaning of the angel's response is hinted at by the allusion of the word "now" (ata) in the response, which is reminiscent of the command "Now (Ata), write for yourselves this Song" [Devorim 31:19]. The song refers to Torah. However, Tosfos in Megillah asks how we see from the words of the pasuk that the above explanation reflects what Yehoshua was asking the angel? Tosfos answers because the angel said "Ha-lanu ata..." [Are you on our side?] The word "lanu" [us] connotes the pasuk "the Torah was commanded to us (lanu) by Moshe" [Devorim 33:4].

They were talking in code. Yehoshua used the word "Lanu" as a code for Torah tzeeva lanu Moshe [The Torah was commanded to us by Moshe.] and the angel used the word "Ata" as a code for "Ata Kisvu lachem es haShira haZos" [Now you write for yourselves this Song]. The Ponevizer Rav asked, if they are already speaking in code, then why didn't the angel use the same code word (lanu) back to Yehoshua that Yehoshua had used in the first place? The Ponevizer Rav offers a beautiful answer. There are two aspects to Torah. First, there is a command to learn Torah. But sometimes it is tough to learn;

sometimes there are legitimate excuses why not to learn. However, there is more to Torah than merely the obligation to learn Torah. Torah is also a song. A song is part of a person's existence. Song comes from the soul. It is part of the innermost feelings of a person. It is part of his essence.

The angel was, in effect, telling Yehoshua that he was not merely chastising them for not learning. For that, they would have had a legitimate excuse -- they were busy; they were placing the city under siege. But if Torah is what it is supposed to be for a Jew -- part of his essence -- like a song, then a person literally can not go a day without it, regardless of the excuse. Because this was not the case, the angel came to complain. Torah must be more than merely a series of commandments. Torah must be "the Song of our soul and the essence of our existence".

It may be 'tough' to learn, but if we are truly attached to Torah, we will not ever contemplate failing to learn. We can not do without it.

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Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 429, Treatment of an Invalid Sefer Torah. Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrand, Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. learn@torah.org 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 203 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

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MessageFrom: Shema Yisrael Torah Network

[shemalists@shemayisrael.com] To: Peninim Parsha Subject: PENINIM ON THE TORAH BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM PARSHAS NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH

And all the nations will say, "For what reason did Hashem do so...why this wrathfulness of great anger?" (29:23) The question asked by the nations of the world is truly a compelling one. Why did Hashem do so to His People, His Nation whom He loves so much? Many nations have been punished for their sins, but no nation has suffered so greatly as Klal Yisrael. What was their transgression that catalyzed such unprecedented punishment?

The answer is written in the following pasuk: "Because they forsook the covenant of Hashem." No other nation was granted such a relationship - a covenant bonding Hashem with Klal Yisrael. Consequently, Hashem does not deal with them as He deals with other nations. When Klal Yisrael sins, they are not simply rebelling; they are, instead, nullifying a covenant of friendship, a bond of love. When one is guilty of a wrongdoing against his friend, it is much worse than if this infraction were to be committed against an average person with whom he has not cemented a bond of friendship.

Horav Eliezer Menachem M. Shach, zl, explains this further. He distinguishes between a Jew's personal relationship with Hashem, and Klal Yisrael's collective relationship. When an individual sins, it is viewed as a shortcoming, a failing due to one's falling under the influence of his yetzer hara, evil inclination. When Klal Yisrael sins as a nation, it is much more serious. Then it is haforas bris, an abrogation of their covenant with Hashem. This is especially noteworthy when the Jewish People as a "nation" do not act in accordance with the code of Jewish Law given to us at Har Sinai. This is referred to as "organizational iniquity," which, in effect, denotes a general breakdown of our relationship with the Almighty. Regrettably, when in the eyes of the world people come across as speaking for the Jewish nation as a whole, we are all responsible for its consequence, even if we do not ascribe to their views and practices. Our indifference is our initiation and, subsequently, our source of responsibility.

It is not in heaven...Nor is it across the sea...Rather, the matter is very near to you - in your mouth and in your heart - to perform it. (30:12,13,14)

The Torah is accessible to all. The goal of knowing and fulfilling the Torah may seem difficult, but it only seems that way. Indeed, it is very much within human reach. All one has to do is make a sincere effort to grasp it - and he will succeed. There is a more profound aspect to the idea of "a sincere effort." Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, cites the Talmud in Temurah 16a wherein Chazal explain the source of Osniel ben Kenaz's name. Actually, his name was Yehudah. He was called Osniel because it is an acronym for "Ono Kel," "Hashem answered him". He is also referred to as Yaavetz, which denotes "Yaetz v'ribeitz Torah b'Yisrael," "he advised and disseminated Torah to Klal Yisrael." Chazal explain that Osniel demanded that he be granted the opportunity to disseminate Torah to the masses. Otherwise, he would go to the grave - immediately! Rav Chaim queries how one can make such a demand on the Almighty? "If you fulfill my request - good. If not - I am finished. I will go to the grave!" Is this not a bit presumptuous? Rav Chaim explains that the key word in Osniel's request was the word "miyad," immediately. He was saying to Hashem that "success or failure is dependent on me, and consequently it is a matter of life or death. I will either make it or I will die." When success in Torah is measured by such extremes, then Hashem responds immediately. This should be the way a ben Torah, student of Torah, studies. He must realize that success or failure are extremes. He either succeeds in grasping the Torah, or he is lost. When success means that much to him - he triumphs. Man's success or failure is determined by his personal striving and attitude. He has no one to blame for his failure other than himself. Likewise, his success is attributed to his own persistence and tenacity - and Hashem's "help."

#### PARASHAS VAYELECH

So now, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the Bnei Yisrael, place it in their mouth. (31:19)

"Simah b'fihem," "place it in their mouth" - this means that we are to make certain that our students are well-versed and thoroughly grasp the Torah. A rebbe, Torah teacher, must review the material as often as needed to ensure that his students are proficient and fully understand the lesson. Chazal teach us about the famous Rav Preida who had a student whose capacity for grasping his Torah lesson was so limited that Rav Preida would have to review the lesson with him four hundred times. Once Rav Preida had to leave to perform a mitzvah. The student, sensing that his rebbe was about to leave, had a more difficult time than usual in comprehending the lesson. Every moment, it seemed that Rav Preida was leaving, causing the student's mind to wander.

Rav Preida was not deterred. He told his student, "Do not worry. I will not leave you," and he proceeded to review the lesson another four hundred times! A voice from Heaven came forth and declared, "You (Rav Preida) may choose your reward from one of two choices: You will either be granted four hundred more years of life; or you, and every member of your generation, will merit Olam Haba, the eternal World to Come." Rav Preida chose the latter, and was subsequently rewarded from Heaven with both rewards.

We wonder why Hashem granted Rav Preida both rewards. His response was correct, for, regardless of one's lifespan, his life on this temporary world is of little consequence in comparison to Olam Haba. Everyone is acutely aware of the significance of the eternal world. What did Rav Preida do that warranted a dual reward?

Horav Yosef Zundel Salant, zl, explains that once Rav Preida was given the opportunity to enter Olam Haba together with his generation, he was willing to "be mevater," relinquish, his chance for longevity - despite the incredible opportunity for personal spiritual advancement. Because he surrendered his own ambitions for the common good, he was doubly rewarded. Hashem did not want him to lose his reward because he was so devoted to the general community. Putting the community first is an awesome challenge - one which is not easily surmounted. We live in a society which lauds taking care of "number one." Torah agrees that our focus should be first on "number

one." It does, however, have a different perspective on Who is number one.

Our Torah leaders understood that greatness was measured by where one placed himself. If the community came first and only then, when everyone's needs were addressed, did he care about his personal needs, then he was worthy of distinction. The Satmar Rebbe, zl, would often relate how a chassid once came to the Sanzer Rav, zl. The Rav asked him, "To which rebbe are you traveling?" "I am going to the Shiniyaver Rav (the son of the Sanzer)." "You are going to my Yechezkele? He is a rebbe? What makes him a rebbe?" the Sanzer asked. "His avodas ha'kodesh, service to Hashem, and Torah study makes him a rebbe," the chassid answered. "No. Neither Torah study nor exceptional devotion transforms one into a leader. Everybody has to serve Hashem without exception. What distinguishes him?" the Sanzer countered.

This went back and forth. Every time the chassid would mention an episode in which the Shiniyaver was exemplary, his father would disregard it. Finally, the chassid reminded himself of an episode worthy of a leader. It was a freezing wintry day and a poor man met the Shiniyaver on the street in the middle of a snowstorm. The Shiniyaver took a look at the man's shoes and noticed that he was not wearing boots. His shoes, or at least what was left of them, were soaked and snow covered. Realizing that the poor man could not traverse the city seeking alms because of his shoe problem, the Shiniyaver removed his own shoes and gave them to the poor man. The poor man could now continue begging and the Shiniyaver was left in the street without boots. When the Sanzer heard this, he declared, "Anyone who ignores his own plight and thinks first of others, is worthy of being a rebbe."

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From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom List

[parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] To: Shabbat\_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshiot Nitzavim-Vayelech by RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom: Parshiot Nitzavim-Vayelech (Deuteronomy 29:9-31:1-30)

By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - These two Biblical portions of Nitzavim-Vayelech always precede Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year of G-d's universal majesty (Malkhiyot) - and this by Rabbinic mandate: "Ezra decreed for Israel that the chastisements of the Priestly Book of Leviticus (Behukotai) be publicly read before Shavuot, and that the chastisements of the Book of Deuteronomy be publicly read before Rosh Hashanah." (BT. Megillah 31b)

Now there are two places in the Bible wherein the text warns the Israelites of the horrific causes of exile, persecution and suffering they will be forced to endure if they do not properly observe the Divine commands: in the portion of Behukotai in the Book of Leviticus and in the portion of Ki Tavo - which we read last week - in the Book of Deuteronomy. Nachmanides (the Ramban) teaches that the first instance of "curses" refers to the destruction of the first Temple and the second to the destruction of the Second Temple. Furthermore, it certainly seems logical that we read one portion of chastisements before we celebrate the Festival of the Giving of the Torah (Shavuot) - in order to emphasize the importance of maintaining the Torah, in order to highlight the existential stake every Israelite has in seeing to it that the entire nation remain true to the teachings of the Torah.

But why read chastisements before the Festival of Rosh Hashanah, when we declare the universal majesty of the Almighty G-d? Rosh Hashanah is the time when we pray to "perfect the world in the kingship of the Almighty," when we commit ourselves to "turn all the wicked of the earth" to the ideals of ethical monotheism, when we anxiously await the period when "every creature will know that You created him, every formed being will understand that You formed him."

What has this universal message to do with the frightening warnings to the Israelites of the dire consequences in store for them if they neglect the Divine commands? And even more to the point, we read the curses of Ki Tavo last week; this week we read Nitzavim-Vayelech, and this Sabbath is the Sabbath before Rosh Hashanah!

There is yet one more fundamental issue we must ponder before we can begin to gain clarity. The chastisements of Ki Tavo conclude with the Biblical words, "These are the words of the covenant, (brit) which the Lord commanded Moses to establish with the Israelites in the land of Moab in addition to the covenant which He established with them in Horeb" (Deuteronomy 28:69). We have already seen the establishment of two covenants, the first one with the paterfamilias Abraham at the very dawn of Jewish history (the Covenant between the Pieces, Genesis 15:9-21), and the second with the Jewish nation at Sinai (Exodus 24:1-9); the covenant with Abraham established the nation-state of Israel and the covenant at Sinai established the religion of Israel. What is the significance of this third covenant at Moab, before Israel's entry into the Holy Land? Why do we require an additional covenant - and what does it teach us?

The Talmud (Tractate Sotah), in a fascinating play on the Hebrew phrase Arvot Moab (literally, the Plains of Moab), maintains that this was the covenant of "co-signership," of mutual responsibility and the inter-dependence of every Jew with every other Jew (arevut Moab, an arev being a co-signer or counter-signer to a legal obligation). But was this not the case as soon as we became a nation-state (at least in potential) at the time of Abraham? Do not family members share mutual responsibility, with each serving as guarantor for the other? I believe that a careful reading of the Biblical text will provide the answer. The introduction to the chastisements - covenant of Ki Tavo emphasizes the fact that the Israelites are about to cross the Jordan River and take their place as a functioning nation-state amongst all other nation-states (Deuteronomy 27:2). They are then to set up large plastered stones upon which the words of the Torah - according to most interpretation, the Ten Commandments - are to be written, "clearly explained" (ba'er heitev); the Talmudic Sages interpret this to mean that they are to be translated into the 70 languages of the world (Deuteronomy 27:8, Commentaries ad loc). A sacrificial altar to G-d is to be erected, "an altar of unhewn stones which iron shall not touch" (Deuteronomy 27:5).

The picture being presented is that of Israel, just about to join the world community of nations, establishing as its "calling-card" the ten commandments of morality, placed at the entrance to the Holy Land and written in languages that every Gentile can understand. The prohibition of lifting iron to the stones of the altar is reminiscent of "turning swords into ploughshares; nation shall not lift up sword against nation and humanity shall not learn war any more" (Isaiah 2, Micah 4). I would submit that this covenant is that of mutuality, inter-dependent co-signership, but not necessarily between Jew and Jew - that was already incorporated into the previous covenants - but rather between Israel and the other nations of the world. After all, when Abraham was originally elected, G-d commanded that "through you all the families of the world will be blessed" - through the message of Ethical monotheism, the vision of a G-d who demands justice, compassion and peace, which Abraham's descendants must convey to the world. This is the true mission of Israel, imminently critical in a global village, wherein every nation is dependent upon every other nation, wherein a terrorist nation - oblivious to the G-d of freedom who punished the totalitarian Pharaoh and commanded "Thou shall not murder" - can destroy the world if it has the nuclear capability to do so. This third covenant is the covenant of Israel's responsibility to the world! And so the covenant does not end with "These are the words of the covenant" (Deuteronomy 28:69), but continues to remind the Israelites how the Almighty punished Pharaoh (Deuteronomy 29:1ff), and to define itself - in Nitzavim - as what G-d swore to the patriarchs (Deuteronomy 29:12), which I would take to mean that Abraham would be the Father of a multitude of nations (Genesis 17:1-3) that on Mount Moriah G-d would be revealed to the world and all nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:14,18), and that a nation and a congregation of nations would emerge from Jacob-Israel (Genesis 35:11). Hence G-d declares that "not with you alone do I establish this covenant... but rather with those who stand with us here today and those who do not stand with us here today." (Deuteronomy 29:13,14). I take this to mean, both with the Israelites as well as with the Gentiles. And so the witnesses to this covenant are the heaven and the earth

(Deuteronomy 30:19) - the entire world. And from this perspective, this covenant of our responsibility to all the nations extends to Nitzavim-Yayelech and most assuredly belongs before Rosh Hashanah, the day in which we re-establish our commitment "to perfect the world in the Kingship of G-d."

Shabbat Shalom and a Good Year of peace for all people.

You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at:

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MEANING IN MITZVOT BY RABBI ASHER MEIR

Each week we discuss one familiar halakhic practice and try to show its beauty and meaning. The columns are based on Rabbi Meir's Meaning in Mitzvot on Kitzur Shulchan Arukh.

BLESSING THE NEW MONTH

Customarily, the Shabbat before Rosh Chodesh is called "Shabbat Mevarchim" because after the Torah reading the coming of the new month is announced and then a special prayer is said (Rema OC 284:7).

However, on this Shabbat no announcement is made, despite the fact that next Shabbat is Rosh Chodesh - the custom is that the month of Tishrei is not announced.

The Magen Avraham explains that this is based on the verse, "Blow the shofar at the new moon, at the covering for the day of our holiday."

(Tehillim 81:4) Unlike other holidays, which are either at the full moon (Pesach, Sukkot) or at least when the moon has begun to appear (Shavuot), the holiday on which we blow the shofar is at the beginning of the month when the moon is completely or almost completely covered.

HIGH HOLIDAY OR HIDE HOLIDAY? The Magen Avraham seems to understand that this verse hints that not only is the moon covered on this holiday, but the holiday itself is in a sense "covered" or hidden. We don't make a fanfare about its approach. There is another halakha with a similar message. In "Sefer Maharil" on the customs of Ashkenazi Jews, the Maharik notes: "It is a proper custom to blow the shofar on Rosh Chodesh Elul, in order to confuse the Accuser, so he does not know when to prosecute. Therefore, we don't blow the shofar on Rosh HaShana eve, so that the Accuser will think that the day of judgment has passed." (Maharil Minhagim, Days of Awe)

According to this explanation, the custom of blowing the shofar during Elul is expressly intended to create confusion (on the part of Satan) exactly when Rosh HaShana falls.

In fact, the entire Rosh HaShana holiday exhibits a pattern of seeming ambivalence. For instance, on Rosh HaShana we do wear clean clothes and groom ourselves for the holiday (OC 581:3); but we do not wear our best Yom Tov clothes (Taz). Similarly, "We eat and drink and rejoice, and do not fast on Rosh HaShana" (OC 597:1). Even so, the continuation of this same chapter explains that we shouldn't eat to satiety, and that according to some traditions even fasting may be permissible.

All of these laws reflect the essential paradox of Rosh HaShana. On the one hand, the Day of Judgment is inherently a day of awe. Who is in the mood for festivities on the day of a court appearance even for a minor infraction?! Certainly on the day of our judgment before the King of Kings we should be in a state of awe. Yet HaShem made this day a holiday as well, "a covering for the day of our holiday". The Tur (OC 581) explains that this shows our confidence that HaShem will judge us favorably. Certainly at the communal level we don't want the day of judgment to seem like an ominous day, as we are confident that the merit of the community of Israel will result in a favorable judgment.

In order to show our confidence in the merit of the Jewish people, Rosh HaShana is marked as a festive day. But in order to experience the awe of judgment, and not to display arrogance as if we have nothing to fear from our heavenly trial, we take pains to obscure the day a bit and not to make it appear that we are too anxious for its arrival.

Rabbi Meir has completed writing a monumental companion to Kitzur Shulchan Aruch which beautifully presents the meanings in our mitzvtv and halacha. It will hopefully be published in the near future.

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From: elaine@jewishdestiny.com Subject: RABBI WEIN'S WEEKLY COLUMNS

Parsha Archive August 30 2002 NITZAVIM-VAYELECH The paradox of Jewish life, of the faithful and the agnostic alike, is revealed in the almost final words of Moses to Israel as recorded in this week's Torah reading, the concluding one for the year 5761 which is now coming to its end. Moses tells Israel that terrible and evil events will befall them in their journey through history. In fact the events and brutalities, the blows and humiliations, are of such a severe nature that they cannot even be described in words alone. Moses tells Israel that they will endure "blows and punishments that are not even recorded in this book," "this book" meaning the book of Dvarim, which is anyway replete with detailed descriptions of tragedy, punishment and curses. Moses' words do not fall on deaf ears. The Jewish people were always aware of the consequences of the covenant with G-d into which they entered at Sinai. But that realization was pretty much theoretical for Moses' generation.

The awful unrelenting reality of the consequences of the covenant of Sinai would be unable to be visualized in its full extent before the blows actually descended upon the people of Israel. Every Jewish generation reacts differently to the "blows and punishments that are not even recorded in this book." Half of Spanish Jewry converted to Christianity (most of them only pro forma) in face of the blows of the Inquisition, while the other half willingly forsook the land, which had hosted them for eight centuries and embarked on fateful and dangerous wanderings. As a reaction to the Chmielnitzky massacres that claimed about 250,000 Eastern European Jews in 1648-9, and the subsequent spiritual debacle caused by the apostate "Messiah," Shabtai Zvi in 1653-8, the Chasidic movement arose and intensified Jewish Torah observance amongst the masses of Eastern European Jews, while Western European Jews in the hundreds of thousands turned first to Reform and Enlightenment and then to full assimilation into the non-Jewish society of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Approximately 250,000 German, Austrian and French Jews actually converted to Christianity in the nineteenth century, not so much out of religious conviction as out of a longing to belong to the "brave new world." Of course, no one of the new Christians saw that their enlightened assimilated grandchildren would be obliterated less than a century later in the same manner as their Eastern European Chasidic cousins. This pattern of differing, almost opposite, reactions to the troubles of Israel have remained valid until today. The terrible events of the Holocaust served to strengthen many Jews in their faith and loyalty to Judaism as well as shattering any ties to that very same faith and loyalty for many other Jews.

Rabbi Meir Leibush Malbim in a letter written a century ago said that Moses told Israel "that great and awful troubles and events will befall you," Israel will respond by saying "That is because G-d is not in my midst, therefore did these troubles occur." Malbim states that a portion of Israel will say "G-d is not in my midst" - we were not pious enough, we did not observe His Torah, we strayed after the gods of modernity, therefore He did not protect us from the consequences of our breaching the covenant. But, Malbim continues, other Jews will say "G-d is not in my midst" means that for us there is no G-d, that we are a secular and cultural nation and not bound by any Sinaitic covenants. Now, over fifty years after the Holocaust, this diversity of interpretation is being acted out within the Jewish people. Assimilation, self-hatred, intermarriage, ignorance of Torah and Judaism are the lot of the many. But a strengthening of Torah knowledge is spreading from the few to the general Jewish society. It will continue to grow and spread and the loyalty of Israel to its covenant of Sinai will again prevail. Shabat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

From: RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY [rmk@torah.org] To: drasha@torah.org Subject: Drasha -- Parshas Vayeilech -- Heard but not Seen

Please Daven on Behalf of R' Avraham Simcha ben Rochel Leah Drasha -- Parshas Vayeilech -- Heard but not Seen

In his parting days with his beloved Klal Yisrael, Hashem reiterates a message to Moshe who in turn imparts those warnings to his people. Hashem said to Moses, "Behold, you will lie with your forefathers, but this people will rise up and stray after the gods of the foreigners of the Land, in whose midst it is coming, and it will forsake Me and annul My covenant that I have sealed with it. My anger will flare against it on that day and I will forsake them; and I will conceal My face from them and they will become prey, and many evils and distresses will encounter it. It will say on that day, 'Is it not because my G-d is not in my midst that these evils have come upon me?' 'What is strange is the next verse. Hashem speaks: 'I will surely conceal My face on that day because of all the evil that it did, for it had turned to gods of others' (Deuteronomy 31:16-18).

Didn't the person admit that G-d is not with him? Didn't he explain that was the reason for his calamities? Why does G-d say that he "will surely conceal My face on that day"?

On Saturday night, October 7, 1994, Corporal Nachshon Wachsmann left with a friend to an exclusive course being held in northern Israel. He told his family he would be back home the following night. Nachshon did not come home on Sunday night. Knowing the responsible nature of her son, his mother Esther Wachsmann immediately contacted military authorities who were not in the least bit concerned, responding that they would check out the hotels in Eilat to see if he had just taken off.

On Tuesday, they were contacted by Israeli television, who told them that they had received a video tape from a Reuters photographer showing their son being held hostage by Hamas terrorists. On that tape, Nachshon was seen, bound hand and foot, with a terrorist whose face was covered with a kaffiya, holding up Nachshon's identity card. He had been kidnapped by the Hamas, who were demanding the release of their spiritual leader, Achmed Yassin, from an Israeli prison, as well as the release of 200 other imprisoned Hamas terrorists. If these demands were not met, he would be executed on Friday at 8:00 PM.

For the next four days, 24 hours a day, the family mobilized to do everything in their power to save their son. They spoke to Prime Minister Rabin, who informed them that he would not negotiate with terrorists. President Clinton intervened. Both Warren Christopher, who was in the area, and the U.S. consul in Jerusalem, Ed Abington, tried to obtain his release through Yasser Arafat. They appealed to Jewish people throughout the world -- and asked them to pray for their son. The Chief Rabbi of Israel delegated three chapters of Psalms to be said every day, and people everywhere, including schoolchildren who had never prayed before, did so for the sake of one precious Jewish soul. On Thursday night, 24 hours before the ultimatum, a prayer vigil was held at the Western Wall, and at the same hour, prayer vigils were held throughout the world in synagogues, schools, community centers and street squares. At the Western Wall 100,000 people arrived, with almost no notice -- Chassidim in black frock coats and long side curls swayed and prayed and cried, side by side with young boys in torn jeans and ponytails and earrings. There was total unity and solidarity of purpose among us -- religious and secular, left wing and right wing, Sephardi and Ashkenazi, old and young, rich and poor -- an occurrence unprecedented in our sadly fragmented society.

On 8:00 PM Friday night, General Yoram Yair, not Nachshon, walked through the Wachsmann's door and brought them the terrible news. A military rescue attempt had failed -- Nachshon had been killed and so had the commander of the rescue team, Captain Nir Poraz.

The funeral was held on Saturday night. Nachshon's father, Yehdah Wachsmann asked Nachshon's Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Mordechai Elon, who gave the eulogy, to answer a question that was being asked world-over. "Did Hashem listen to all the prayers?"

"Please tell all our people that G-d did listen to our prayers and that He collected all our tears. He just said, "No."

The Torah wants us to understand that there is no such thing as, "my G-d is not in my midst."

Hashem is always in our midst. What we must understand during times of difficult tragedies is that despite the fact that He is here with us, sometimes He just says, "No."

Perhaps our mission is to understand that despite the all too often "no" we must keep sending letters. Hashem is there. And if we continue to implore, he will soon respond with a "yes."

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From: jgross [jgross@torah.org] To: weekly-halacha@torah.org  
Subject: Weekly Halacha - Parshas Netzavim-Vayeilech WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5762

By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights  
A discussion of Halachic topics. For final rulings, consult your Rav  
PREPARING FOR YOM TOV: THE MITZVAH OF BIRKAS KOHANIM  
With Rosh Hashanah, followed closely by Yom Kippur and Sukkos, just around the corner, it is time to review a mitzvah which is practiced only on Yomim Tovim. Even today when the Beis ha-Mikdash is no longer standing, the Biblical(1) mitzvah of nesias kapayim - the obligation of the kohanim to lift up their hands and bless the Jewish people with the three verses recorded in Parashas Naso(2) -- remains. Although this mitzvah applies at all times and in all places(3), it has become customary in most congregations, especially outside of Eretz Yisrael, to perform it only during the Mussaf service of Yom Tov(4). The poskim suggest several reasons for the curtailment of nesias kapayim:

1. It is proper for kohanim to immerse themselves in a mikveh before nesias kapayim, and it is difficult for them to do so on a daily or even a weekly basis(5).

2. Nesias kapayim should be performed when people are relaxed and not in a hurry to go to work. Even on Shabbos, people are preoccupied with concerns about their livelihood. Only at the end of Mussaf on Yom Tov, when people are in an elevated mood and are ready to leave shul and partake of the simchas Yom Tov, is the time conducive for nesias kapayim(6).

3. It was common in the olden days for non-Jews to barge into shuls at will, and birkas kohanim may be said in the presence of Jews only(7).

4. With the passage of time, the lineage and yichus of the kohanim have become blurred. We nevertheless allow them to bless the people on Yom Tov so that this mitzvah will not be completely forsaken and forgotten(8).

In the past, many poskim disputed and refuted the above-stated reasons(9), and some even sought to change the long-standing practice and reinstate birkas kohanim on a daily basis(10). Ultimately, all these attempts failed - almost as if a bas kol min ha-shamayim decreed that nesias kapayim must be relegated to Yom Tov Mussaf alone(11) - and the vast majority of congregations outside of Eretz Yisrael recite birkas kohanim on Yom Tov only. Regrettably, the discussion involving the proper time and occasion for performing nesias kapayim led to some confusion. Some congregations have the custom not to recite birkas kohanim on a Yom Tov which falls on Shabbos, as it does this year. Although several poskim have attempted to explain the reason behind this practice(12) and many prominent congregations practice this custom even today, the consensus of the poskim is that it has "no ta'am or rei'ach"(13), it has no basis in halachah(14), it is not a minhag tov(15) and it should be discontinued(16), provided that there will not be any strife or discord within the congregation if the practice is abandoned.

**UPON WHOM DOES THE OBLIGATION REST?** Many authorities maintain that in addition to the mitzvah of the kohanim to bless the Jewish people, there is also a separate mitzvah for every Jew to be

blessed by the kohanim(17). Women, too, are included in this mitzvah(18). Let us clarify, then, the halachos which pertain to the members of the congregation, to the yisraelim and leviyim who are awaiting the blessings from the kohanim:

**WHAT THE CONGREGATION IS SUPPOSED TO DO:**

The custom is for the entire congregation to stand(19) - with awe and seriousness - during the birkas kohanim(20). A weak or sick person, however, may sit(21).

Every person present must answer amen to each of the three verses that the kohanim recite. One who is in shul and does not answer amen excludes himself from the blessing and does not fulfill the mitzvah(22). The poskim debate whether it is proper to recite Baruch hu u'varuch shemo when the name of Hashem is mentioned during the blessings. One may follow his customary practice, but he should do so quietly(23). The congregants must give their undivided attention to the words of the blessings. Their eyes should be lowered as if they are davening Shemoneh Esrei(24). In order to fulfill the mitzvah properly, they must hear every single letter of every single word(25).

**WHAT THE CONGREGATION IS \*NOT\* SUPPOSED TO DO:**

Since complete concentration is required while listening to the blessings, it is forbidden to look around the shul or to stare at the kohanim while birkas kohanim is being recited(26). The custom is not to look at them at all, neither at their faces nor at their hands(27). For this reason, many have the custom of covering their face with a tallis during birkas kohanim(28). It is prohibited to speak, learn, or say Tehillim during birkas kohanim(29), nor is it proper to recite any other verses [even those verses which appear alongside in many siddurim and machzorim] or prayers while birkas kohanim is taking place(30).

When answering amen, it is important to make sure that the kohanim have completely finished the word that they are reciting(31). At the conclusion of birkas kohanim, the custom is for the congregation to thank the kohanim for their blessing(32). While some kohanim have the custom of responding with beruchim tihyu'(33), others advise the kohanim against responding in those words in order to avoid a halachic dispute as to whether their response constitutes an additional blessing over and beyond what is mandated by the Torah(34).

**WHERE SHOULD THE PEOPLE LISTENING TO THE BLESSINGS BE?**

Since the kohanim must face the congregants during birkas kohanim(35), anyone standing behind the kohanim must leave his seat and face the kohanim(36). The people who are standing to the side of the kohanim should turn their faces so that they face the kohanim(37). It is preferable that the congregation not be standing on a surface higher than the kohanim. Consequently, one should not stand on the bimah during birkas kohanim(38). Some have the custom of moving up to the front of the shul so that nothing intervenes between them and the kohanim. There are valid sources and reasons for this custom(39).

**WHEN BIRKAS KOHANIM INTERFERES WITH OTHER MITZVOS:**

One who is reciting Kerias Shema [or its blessings] when the congregation is reciting birkas kohanim, should stop and listen to the blessings. He must answer amen to the blessings of the kohanim but not to the blessing of Levareich es amo Yisrael(40).

One who is reciting Shemoneh Esrei when the sheliach tzipbur is about to recite birkas kohanim should stop and listen(41). He may not, however, leave his place to face the kohanim nor may he answer amen to the blessings of the kohanim. In view of this potential conflict, one should not start Shemoneh Esrei unless he is sure to finish before birkas kohanim(42).

**FOOTNOTES:** 1 Footnote to Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 128:133, who flatly rejects the minority opinion which maintains that it is merely a rabbinical mitzvah. See Koi Bo (Teffillah 11) who says that Shlomo ha-Melech instituted birkas kohanim outside the Beis ha-Mikdash. 2 Bamidbar 6:24-27. 3 Chinuch 378. 4 In certain parts of Eretz Yisrael, nesias kapayim is performed only on Shabbos. 5 Sefer Chasidim 1613, quoted by Beis Yosef O.C. 128, who rejects this argument for several reasons. 6 Rama 128:44, Mishnah Berurah 167. Yom Kippur, too, is a day of happiness, since Hashem forgives our sins; ibid. 166. 7 Responsa Maharil 21; Responsa Zera Emes 3:13 quoting the Zohar. 8 Responsa Beis Efrayim 6. 9 See Responsa Rama Mi'pano 95 and Beis Yosef O.C. 128. 10 The Gr"a and his disciple Reb Chayim of Volozhin repeatedly attempted to change the custom. Reb Nosson Adler, in his own beis medrash, performed birkas kohanim daily. 11 Language of the Aruch ha-Shulchan 128:64. See similar idea in Meishiv Davar 2:104. 12 There are several possible theories as to how this custom developed: 1. The Ribbono shel olam prayer is not said on Shabbos (Magen Avraham 128:70); 2. Birkas kohanim is not said unless the kohanim have immersed themselves, which is not done on Shabbos (ibid.); 3. Shabbos itself serves as a shemirah and no additional blessing is needed (Da'as Torah 128:44); 4. To avoid inadvertently

transgressing the prohibition of carrying water which is needed to wash the hands of the kohanim (Eishel Avraham 128). 5. So that presents for the kohanim would not be carried on Shabbos (Mor Veahalos). 13 Taz 128:35; Aruch ha-Shulchan 128:64. 14 Shulchan Aruch Harav 128:57; Chayei Adam 32:11; Meishiv Davar 1:47; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 100:1; Mishnah Berurah 128:165; Minchas Elazar 3:56. 15 Igros Moshe O.C. 3:18. 16 Igros Moshe O.C. 5:15. 17 This is the view of Sefer Chareidim 12:18 [and other Rishonim], and it is quoted as halachah by many later authorities, including the Be'ur Halachah (beginning of 128) and Igros Moshe O.C. 4:21. There are also dissenting opinions. See Responsa Chasam Sofer 22 and 167 and Devar Avraham 1:31 for a review of this issue. 18 Minchas Chinuch 378-4; Igros Moshe O.C. 5:20-23. 19 Leaning heavily on a shtender, etc. is considered like sitting - Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 607:8. 20 Mishnah Berurah 128:51. 21 Tzitz Eliezer 14:18; Yechaveh Da'as 5:15. 22 Igros Moshe O.C. 2:31. 23 See Yechaveh Da'as 4:9 for the various views. 24 O.C. 128:23. 25 Mishnah Berurah 128:65 and 67. 26 O.C. 128:23. 27 Mishnah Berurah 128:88. In addition to being a distraction, it is also not proper to look at the kohanim since the Shechinah rests on their hands; Kaf ha-Chayim 128:140. 28 Mishnah Berurah 128:92. 29 O.C. 128:26, Be'er Heitev 46, and Mishnah Berurah 102. 30 Mishnah Berurah 128:103. 31 O.C. 128:18. 32 Mishnah Berurah 128:60. See R'shosh Sh'vi'is 4:2 for an explanation. 33 Aruch ha-Shulchan 128:24. 34 Har Tzvi 62 based on the view of the Rambam, quoted by Be'ur Halachah 128:27. 35 O.C. 128:10. 36 O.C. 128:24. Since, as mentioned earlier, women are also included in this mitzvah, they, too, should make sure not to stand behind the kohanim. 37 Be'ur Halachah 128:24. 38 Ko Sevarchu (Tzadik 1). 39 See Minhagei Chasam Sofer 88 and Orchos Rabbeinu. 40 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:21; Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:78; Az Nidberu 11:36; 12:25. 41 Chazon Ish (Dinim v'Hanhagos 4:29); Igros Moshe O.C. 4:21; Shevet ha-Levi 3:15. A dissenting opinion maintains that he need not do so; Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (Avnei Yashfei on Tefillah, pg. 205); Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:77. 42 Igros Moshe O.C. 4:21. See, however, Igros Moshe O.C. 5:20-23 where he rules that even during Shemoneh Esrei one should leave his place to face the kohanim. Weekly-Halachah, Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. The author, Rabbi Neustadt, is the principal of Yavne Teachers' College in Cleveland, Ohio. He is also the Magid Shiur of a daily Mishna Berurah class at Congregation Shomre Shabbos. The Weekly-Halachah Series is distributed L'zchus Doniel Meir ben Hinda. Weekly sponsorships are available - please mail to jgross+@torah.org. Torah.org: The Judaism Site <http://www.torah.org/> Project Genesis, Inc. [learn@torah.org](mailto:learn@torah.org) 122 Slade Avenue, Suite 203 (410) 602-1350 Baltimore, MD 21208

From: ohr@ohr.edu To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Nitzavim / Vayelech

\* TORAH WEEKLY \* Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshat Nitzavim / Vayelech For the week ending 31 August 2002 / 23 Elul 5762 Sponsored by the Kof-K Kosher Supervision [www.kof-k.org](http://www.kof-k.org) | [info@kof-k.org](mailto:info@kof-k.org)

#### THE HIDDEN FACE

"My anger will flare against him on that day and I will forsake them; and I will hide My face from them and they will become prey... He will say on that day 'Is it not because my G-d is not in my midst that these evils have come upon me?'" (31:17)

When tragedy befalls the Jewish People, we may think that Hashem has abandoned us to our enemies. When we are beset by those who wish to destroy us and they seem to be unstoppable while we are powerless, and they slay us from morning till evening, let us remember this verse.

Hashem will never desert us; rather we feel that He has forsaken us because He has 'hidden His face.' When Hashem 'hides His face' it means that we cannot see Him controlling events. It seems to us that chaos rules. Of course, nothing happens that He does not decree. The decree for every event that has happened this year was sealed last Yom Kippur: "Who will live and who will die..."

And if we look carefully at events, even though we cannot see Hashem's 'face,' we can, at least, discern His 'back.' We can see the telltale footprints in the snow of History.

We sometimes feel that we have failed Hashem so totally that there is no way we can find our way back to Him. We should remember that He is always there behind the mask of the world, waiting for us to return through prayer and teshuva (repentance).

#### ROOT AND BRANCH

"Not with you alone do I seal this covenant.... and with whoever is not here" (29:13-14)

When the Jewish People accepted the Torah at Sinai, they accepted it not only for themselves, but on behalf of all their descendants till the end of time.

One might ask "What right did they have to obligate me to keep the Torah? If they wanted to keep it, fine! But why should I have to keep it!"

Take a look at a young tree which has yet to grow branches. Every branch which will grow from this tree is part of the tree itself. The branches cannot secede from the tree. If it were not for the tree there would be no branches, and even though the branches have not

yet appeared, they are part of the tree now. Similarly every Jew is a branch of the tree which is the Jewish People. We are all bound by the acceptance of Torah because our potential to exist was already rooted in our forefathers.

Thus, since our forefathers accepted the Torah, it is as though we accepted it ourselves.

There is also a mystical concept that every Jewish soul that would ever live "stood" at Sinai in an incorporeal form and accepted the Torah. So, in reality, each individual was there as well.

#### THE SPEED OF THOUGHT

"For this commandment that I command you today, it is not hidden from you... it is not in Heaven... nor is it over the sea... for it is very near to you, in your mouth and your heart to do it." (30:11-14)

The Torah tells us that this commandment is not over the sea; it is in your mouth and your heart to do it.

In other words, one might have thought that it is over the sea. How is it possible that something as close as the mouth and the heart could ever be confused with being as distant as the heavens or over the sea?

Man consists of two opposing elements, body and soul. If we put our neshama, our soul, in charge of our body we can reach a level greater than the angels. If, on the other hand, we allow our body to dominate our spiritual side we become like animals.

For just as an animal has no taste for wisdom and intellectual discernment, preferring hay, straw and the like, so too a person who centers himself on physicality finds things of the spirit without taste. Thus, man is an amalgam of two elements as disparate as heaven and earth.

This is what the Torah is teaching us here. When a person turns his back on the great worth of the spiritual world, that world is indeed extremely distant from him - literally "in the heavens." However the Torah tells him that really "it is very near to you." If you just give the spiritual dominion over the physical, then "it is in your mouth and your heart to do it."

These words illustrate the enormous potential of man. In one second, he can rise to the heights by bringing Torah into his mouth and his heart, by bringing the furthest thing in the world close to him: In a split second, a thought can transport him from languishing in shadow to basking in great light; to being elevated to the loftiest heights. Surely - "it is not hidden from you."

#### RESTING IN THE HEART

"And Moshe went and spoke these words to all Yisrael" (31:1)

Why doesn't the Torah tell us where Moshe went?

In every Jew throughout the ages, there is a little spark of Moshe Rabbeinu. That's where Moshe went. That was his resting place. Thus the end of the verse: "And Moshe went (and spoke these words) to all Yisrael."

Maybe that is one of the reasons that no one knows where Moshe is buried, because Moshe's final resting place is in the heart of every Jew.

Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR  
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