

עֵפֶרֶת הַשָּׁבוּעַ



A Weekly Torah Publication from the Students of Mesivta Ateres Yaakov
Ruth & Hyman Simon High School

פרשיות נצבים וילך
כ"ה אלול תשס"ד
September 11, 2004

Candle Lighting:	6:55
Latest שמע:	9:43
Latest שחרית:	10:52
Earliest הבדלה:	7:57

MESIVTA ATERES YAAKOV
wishes a Mazal Tov to
Mr & Mrs Eliezer Allman
and their entire family
on the occasion of
their son **Effie**
becoming a
Bar Mitzva

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Rabbi Elchonon Zomber, Rebbe

החיים והמות נתתי לפניך . . . ובחרת בחיים [ל:יט]

I HAVE SET LIFE AND DEATH BEFORE YOU. . . AND YOU SHOULD CHOOSE LIFE
The Chasam Sofer points out the obvious question. Does a person ever willingly choose death? Certainly not! That being the case, why does the Torah need to exhort us to choose life if we would instinctively do so anyway?

A Ramban in Acharei Mos may shed some light on this topic. The *pasuk* says [ויקרא יח:ד] *אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם (ויקרא יח:ד) and live through them.*

The Ramban understands this *pasuk* to be telling us that mitzvah observance and Torah learning give us life. What is the definition of life? However we define it for ourselves. If Olam Hazei is our focus, Hashem will be sensitive to that and provide us with all our physical needs. If Olam Habah is our goal, Hashem will help us come close to Him, thereby earning a secure spot in the World to Come.

Ironically, even a person whose objective is to be an *eved Hashem* will receive physical comforts. Why? Because Hashem wants His *eved* to be able to serve Him without any distractions. If so, desiring Olam Habah earns you the best of both worlds.

With this, the Chasam Sofer says we can answer our question. Our *pasuk* is talking to a person who is faced with the dilemma of having to choose what type of life he wants for himself. The difficulty here is in the fact that whatever he chooses will result in a physically comfortable life. If it's Olam Hazei he desires, is there really any difference how he chooses?

To this person the Torah advises *choose the life of dveikus!* Why? "למען תחיה אתה וזרעך." Many

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THE RENT IS DUE!

Reuven Davies, 12th Grade

וילך משה . . . ויאמר אלהים בן מאה ועשרים שנה אנכי היום [לא:א-ב]

AND MOSHE WENT. . . AND SAID TO THEM (BNEI YISROEL)

I AM ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY YEARS OLD TODAY

Moshe Rabbeinu informs Bnei Yisroel of his imminent death and gives them his final instructions. Hashem then speaks to Moshe and declares, "הן קרבו ימך למות ולא ידו", BEHOLD, YOUR DAYS HAVE DRAWN CLOSE TO DIE".

The Ohr HaChaim asks the question on the latter *pasuk*, of just what is the purpose of the word 'הן' in this phrase? He answers that Hashem was confirming that which Moshe had told Bnei Yisroel earlier. Yes, it is time for you to die.

The Medrash now comes in and offers a view of what went on behind the curtain. Moshe challenged Hashem, "I praised you with the term 'הן' when I said: 'הן, לה' אלקיך השמים ושמי השמים', Behold, the heavens and the 'heavens heavens' are Hashem's". Now, you are decreeing death upon me with that same word 'הן'!?"

Hashem thunders His response to Moshe: "*Shachain ra!* (Such an) Evil tenant!" When I sent you to redeem Bnei Yisroel from Mitzrayim, you, using the word 'הן', spoke harmfully about Bnei Yisroel. You said: "והן לא יאמינו לי", *and they will not believe me*". You therefore deserve to have your death decreed with the word 'הן'."

There is a huge question here. We now understand the meaning of 'הן' but why was Moshe Rabbeinu being rebuked by Hashem by being called of all things a "*Shachain ra* (evil tenant)"? The Ohr Yahel explains that there are three types of people involved in rental properties: the owner, a good tenant and an evil tenant. The owner is totally at peace with himself as he collects his rent - he deserves compensation from the tenant

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times a person may enjoy his wealth but his children are ruined by it. How can one be assured that this physical comfort won't be at the expense of instilling proper values in his children? The Torah guarantees us that if דביקות בה' is our priority then there will be no deleterious effects on our children from the wealth Hashem provides us. The *pasuk* concludes לאהבה את ה' ולדבקה בו. The type of life that we should aspire towards is the one that brings us to love Hashem and cling to Him.

who is living in, and benefiting from, his property. A good tenant, though he is cognizant of the fact that he's paying for an abode that isn't his and that he'll own no part of it even after the payment, he still clearly recognizes his responsibility to pay for the benefit he is receiving. This emanates from the crystal-clear understanding that the house belongs to the owner and he's only passing through. An evil tenant, on the other hand, denies the benefit that he's receiving from the owner. Taking it even a step further, he feels that he's doing the owner a favor by guarding the house!

Hashem is the Master, i.e. Owner of the world. Man is certainly the tenant. A 'good tenant' doesn't feel that he's 'helping' the Owner. He recognizes that the head and arm upon which he places his tefillin are not his own. The doorpost on which he puts his mezuzah also does not belong to him. He goes through life without ever feeling that he deserves; that things are coming to him. He recognizes the world's Owner and his responsibility to 'pay' for his usage. The evil tenant thinks he's doing Hashem favors by fulfilling the mitzvahs. Hashem therefore owes him. He doesn't appreciate the fact that Hashem is the Master of All. He believes that he is the real owner. With this we can understand the Medrash quoted above. Moshe mentioned what he felt was a merit - that, using the word 'הן', he had praised Hashem. Any feeling of "I

deserve" reveals a lacking in the recognition of Hashem as the Master-Owner. He was immediately labeled an evil tenant. "At another time you used that same word 'הן' in a very different context. You spoke badly about Bnei Yisroel saying: "והן לא יאמינו לי", and they will not believe me!" Moshe Rabbeinu saw that they doubted Hashem's ability to redeem them. He discerned in them a lacking in the recognition of Hashem as the All-Powerful, Master-Owner. Yet, Moshe failed to discern that same lacking in himself. . . Hashem therefore tells him: "הן קרבו ימך למות", Behold, your days have drawn close to die."

Unfortunately for the Jewish people, the problem does not end here. We see from further in the parsha that this problem is something every Jew needs to be concerned about. In fact the Torah goes on to explain this very same fault in the parsha to further warn and give instructions against this deadly sin, a sin that was strong enough to haunt even the greatest tzaddik, Moshe Rabeinu! In the midst of this parsha, the concept of 'hester panim' is introduced. It is the punishment of punishments for straying from the Torah.

" . . . They shall be devoured, and many evils and distresses will occur to them, until they will say that day, 'Are not these evil things happening to us because our G-d is not with us?' And I will surely hide My face that day, because of all the evil they

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INSIGHTS ON THE PARSHA

by Avi Lieberman

ראה נתתי לפניך היום את החיים ואת הטוב ואת המוות ואת הרע. . . ובחרת בחיים [ל:טו, יט]

SEE, I HAVE PLACED BEFORE YOU TODAY THE LIFE AND THE GOOD,
AND THE DEATH AND THE EVIL. . . AND YOU WILL CHOOSE LIFE.

Towards the end of Parshas Nitzavim, Moshe Rabbeinu tells Klal Yisroel, "Today I have placed before you the paths of good and evil – and you should choose the *derech tov*, the path of life." There seems to be a supplementary meaning when Moshe Rabbeinu states that the choice of paths has been placed before us *today*. What significance does this wording have to us?

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt"l* explains that the choice of good or evil is placed before us every single day. We have to decide *today*, as we will tomorrow, which path we will follow, and cannot rely on our past actions and assume that we can put ourselves on cruise control. Every day is a new day that presents new challenges with new opportunities.

One day, Yankif saw his neighbor Shmerel pulling his wagon up the hill, with grunts freely emanating from his mouth. "Hard day?" asked Yankif. "Oy vail!" replied Shmerel. "I'm an old man and I'm still working hard, I constantly have flooding in my house, and my children expect me to put them through Beis Medrash!"

The next day, Yankif once again saw Shmerel pushing his wagon, but this time a pleasant tune was coming from his lips. "How's everything *today*, my friend?!" Shmerel looked up and answered, "Wow! I'm not as young as I used to be, and yet I am still able to support myself without aid! I also own my very own house for me and my family to live in, and through all these years I've been able to handle whatever situation or problem that came up! Furthermore, all my children are interested in continuing their Torah learning! Isn't life grand?!"

Not only do we have the opportunity and obligation to grow each day through the new challenges life presents us and by making the right choices, but we must also take what has always been there and renew it. We must see everything that Hashem has presented us with throughout our life and realize it was to our benefit. Only after appreciating what we have can we advance into our day and follow the right path. As we prepare for the Yomim Noroim, let us first reflect on this *past* year and thank Hashem for everything we grew in, everything we gained, and everything we were protected from. Let us realize that just like everything which happens till this Wednesday night was declared last Rosh Hashana, our tefilla and proper preparation for this Rosh Hashana can bring true deliverance and salvation within this upcoming year as well. May we be *zoche* to just that. Good Shabbos.

FOCUS ON GREATNESS

CHACHAM YOSEF CHAIM
The Ben Ish Chai
5592/1832 - 5669/1909



- Rav Eliyahu and his wife were childless for many years. Finally, ten years after their marriage, his wife made the long journey from Baghdad to Morocco to request a blessing from the renowned Rav Yaakov Abuchatzera, the Abir Yaakov, who blessed her that she would give birth to a child who would one day illuminate the eyes of Jews everywhere. Less than a year later, she gave birth to a boy, who was named Yosef Chaim.

- Yosef Chaim was born in 1832, in Baghdad, Iraq, and descended from an illustrious line of talmidei chachamim.

- As a child, he spent most of his time studying in his father's large library.

- At the age of ten, Yosef Chaim left the cheder in which he learned and began to study with his uncle, the great Rav David Chai Nissim, who eventually founded the famed Shoshanim LeDavid Yeshiva located in the Beis Yisroel section of Yerushalayim.

- His father, the town Rav, passed away when R' Yosef Chaim was twenty five years old. The Jews of Baghdad accepted him to fill his father's place, despite his youth.

- Rav Yosef Chaim was renowned for his unique drashos and shiurim. Every morning for nearly fifty years - except for a seven-year period during which he went into seclusion - he delivered a drasha and shiur in halacha and aggada.

- This shiur that he gave became the foundation of his works Ben Yehoyada and Mekabtzil, which also include many of the Arizal's insights.

- In 1882, Rav Yosef Chaim suffered a number of personal tragedies. On the ninth of Shevat that year, three of his bothers were unjustly imprisoned. Rav Yosef Chaim's mother, unable to bear the shame and the pain, fell ill as a result and soon passed away. The brothers remained in prison for three years until their innocence was proven.

- These events deeply affected Rav Yosef Chaim, who did

not leave his home for the next seven years, foregoing even his drashos. He also fasted every day and spent most of his time studying kabbala.

- When the seven years ended, he once more resumed his drashos, to the great joy of the community.

- His contribution to Jewry was not restricted to Baghdad, but rather his teachings were accepted throughout the Sephardi world, and are still taught today.

- Authored many works, both in *halacha* and *aggadah*.

- Four times a year, Reb Yosef Chaim would deliver a Shabbos drasha in the Tsallat Lechbri Shul (Large Synagogue). According to tradition, Yehoyachin king of Yehudah built this shul at the beginning of the Babylonian exile with earth that had been brought from Eretz Yisroel.

- When Rav Yosef Chaim delivered these lectures, the shul, which contained 10,000 seats, was filled to capacity. Rav Yosef Chaim would don white attire and a tallis, creating a very ascetic and angelic appearance.

- During the drashos, Rav Yosef Chaim's voice was so powerful that he could be heard outside the shul, which his son Rav Yaakov described as a "superhuman feat."

- These special drashos were the basis of his monumental Ben Ish Chai, which is considered the Sephardic Kitzur Shulchan Aruch. The sefer combines the weekly parsha with practical halacha.

- In 5669, Rav Yosef Chaim spent a shabbos during Elul in the village of Getz, where he addressed its Jews and encouraged them to do complete teshuva.

- On that Motzei Shabbos, he suddenly fell ill and on Sunday evening, the 13th of Elul, he returned his pure soul to its Maker.

- From his sefer Rav Yosef Chaim became known as the Ben Ish Chai. He was succeeded after his death by his son Rav Yaakov who became rav and maggid of Baghdad.

REUVEN DAVIES (continued from page 2)

have done by turning after other gods [לֹא:י]." Something that we see every day; people questioning whether Hashem exists, where is He at my time of need, or "How could this happen in Hashem's world"? This is the same element that was cited before. Why is everybody questioning the owner of the big apartment building of life? Many are hoping or pretending the Owner is not home and they, the tenant, are the one in charge! Why should they even think of paying rent? Yet again, the Torah anticipated such questions, as it was something which arose in the times of Moshe and would surely happen again. This concept was therefore highlighted in the Torah for all generations to see, to learn from, and possibly say, "Perhaps we are that generation being spoken about here?"

Unfortunately, many Jews constantly reject the Torah without ever having learned it. The don't open the curtains which reveal the true Owner constantly at work! People are scared to admit to a Ruler, which would require serious soul-searching. Yet it is actually harder, impossible in fact, to prove that there is *not* an Almighty Being overseeing everything! Therefore, if the remedy of true understanding is found in this parsha, why is it not displayed in a more easily accessible source? The answer is quite simple.

Moshe Rabbeinu knew exactly where to plant his powerful message before and after his death, for generations to read. "For I know your rebellion, and your stiff neck; behold, while I am yet alive with you this day you have been rebellious against G-d-how much more so will this be the case after my death [לֹא:י]."
This important lesson was placed here because of the time of year these parshiyos fall out on the calendar. Just before Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, any message we see can truly be taken in with the deepest emotions and act as a rejuvenation. In the next few weeks it is our duty to learn Torah and perhaps to spruce up our apartments so our Landlord will see the vast love we have for Him. Let us not fall into the same trap as so many others have before us, and let this year truly be one of striving and success.

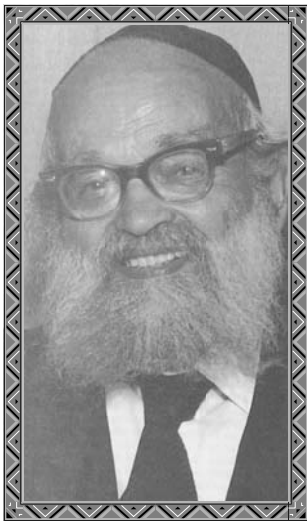
אמת ליעקב

Weekly Insights from Moreinu HoRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l

הן קרבו ימיד למות, קרא את יהושע והתציבו באהל מועד, ואצונו [ל"א:ד"]

BEHOLD THE DAY IS APPROACHING FOR YOU TO DIE, SO CALL YEHOSHUA AND STAND HIM BEFORE THE *OHEL MOED*, SO THAT I MAY COMMAND HIM.

During this episode, Hashem officially appointed Yehoshua as Moshe Rabbeinu's successor to lead Klal Yisroel. There is a question on this *pasuk* that is raised by many of the *mephorshim*. What is the translation of the word "ואצונו?" The literal translation of the word is, "And I will command him." However, this translation does not fit in the context of this *pasuk*, as Hashem did not issue any commands to Yehoshua during this episode. Different *mephorshim* offer various other definitions for the word 'ואצונו.' Rashi explains that the word in this context means, "And I will motivate him." Hashem wanted to motivate Yehoshua to be a fitting leader for Klal Yisroel.



HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt'l, follows the explanation of the Sforno, that the word "ואצונו" means "And I will appoint him." The *pasuk* is simply stating that Yehoshua was to be appointed as the new leader of Klal Yisroel.

In reality, this is not the only place where the word "ואצונו" is used when discussing the appointment of a leader of Klal Yisroel. When David was anointed as the king over Klal Yisroel [שמואל ב, ו:כ"א], the *pasuk* there uses the same word. Rav Yaakov offers a reason for the specific use of this word when discussing the appointment of a leader.

Throughout Tanach, we find that the leaders of Klal Yisroel reluctantly accepted their positions. For example, we know that Moshe spent one full week trying to convince Hashem that he was not the proper choice to be the leader of Klal Yisroel. Additionally, when Shaul was chosen as the first king, he tried to hide to avoid the position. This idea is based on a *mishnah* in Pirkei Avos, which teaches us, "שנא את הרבנות [א:ז], HATE POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY." Authority has the tendency to corrupt a person, and increase his haughtiness. As such, all of those who led Klal Yisroel were very hesitant to accept their positions. They were only willing to accept authority when directly commanded by Hashem to do so. Therefore, the word 'ואצונו' is appropriately used, as it was only through the direct command of Hashem that all of these leaders were willing to accept their positions.

How fortunate we are to have leaders of such *anivus*, yet full of vigor and vitality. May we be *zoche* for leaders of such caliber to lead us to our redemption, *bimheirah biyameinu*.

וישלכם אל ארץ אחרת [כט:כז] AND HE CAST THEM INTO ANOTHER LAND. . . .

The word *וישלכם*, and *He cast them*, is spelled with a large sized *ל*. The *Chomas Anoch* brings down that when you take away the letter *ל* from the word *וישלכם*, the *gematria* of the remaining letters equal that of *עשו* - 376. The *Chomas Anoch* also points out that the letter *ל* stands for the teaching and learning of Torah (ללמוד וללמד).

This allusion shows us that when you abandon teaching and learning Torah, Eisav will become the dominant force. This confirms the saying of our Chachomim that if the voice of Yaakov is getting weak and unsure of itself, then the hands of Eisav wield power. Let us daven for the strength to continue in the path of Torah, giving us the stronger hand.

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We would like to thank
Franklin Printing
for printing this week's
edition of the
Ateres HaShavua.

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