

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 52

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NITZAVIM/VAYELECH

25th Elul 5774

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 29, verses 9 - 28

- ✚ Moshe gathers Bnai Yisrael together and proclaims that they are all going to be part of a new Covenant with Hashem establishing them as 'Hashem's chosen nation. This Covenant not only binds them together now but also with all of their future generations too.
- ✚ Hashem warns his people, not to go against Him by being tempted to live in the other nation's idolatrous way of life as it would result with their land being cursed and being forced into Golus (Exile).

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 30, verses 1 - 6

- ✚ Moshe Assures B'nai Yisrael that when they realise why they have been placed in Golus (exile). And have started doing Teshuva and fulfilling all the 613 mitzvot once more; Hashem will show compassion and return them back to the Land of Israel.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 30, verses 7 - 14

- ✚ When Hashem reunites His people's from Golus, Bnai Yisrael will once again serve him, and be blessed with an abundance of crops in the field, livestock and children.
- ✚ Moshe expresses that all the Mitzvot are in your grasp. "You don't need to look in the Heavens, or travel across the sea to find and perform them.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 30, verse 15 - Chapter 31, verse 6

- ✚ Moshe tells the people that the choice of life and death is in their hands. If they decide to walk in Hashem's ways then you will live and multiply. However if you prefer not to listen and go the other way, then you will be left with nothing and cease to exist.
- ✚ Moshe calls upon the Heaven and the earth to serve as eternal witnesses to uphold whichever choice was made. Moshe implores them to realise Hashem is your life and that they should choose life.
- ✚ Moshe informs his nation that he is now 120 years old and Hashem has refused him entry into the Promised Land. He tells them not to worry because their new leader Yehoshua (Joshua) with Hashem's guidance will help them in conquering the land.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 31, verses 7 - 13

- ✚ Moshe writes down the whole Torah and presents it to the Kohanim, Levi'im and the tribal elders of Bnai Yisrael.
- ✚ Moshe instructs his nation that at the end of every Shmittah year, during Succot. The Torah must be read by their Leader. This will be known as the 'Hak'hayl ceremony' and must be implemented in order to teach Bnai Yisrael to fear Hashem and to take great care when performing the mitzvot of the Torah.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 31, verses 14 – 19 and

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 31, verses 20 - 30

- ✚ Hashem tells Moshe he is about to die and that he should write a poem and teach it to Bnai Yisrael so it can be recited for all time. Moshe obeys and presents the Poem to the Levi'im who place it alongside the Aron as a witness.
- ✚ Moshe tells the nation that he knows one day they will come to sin but Hashem will ultimately forgive them.
- ✚ Finally Moshe recites the words of the Poem to the entire congregation which is narrated in next week's sedra

Haftorah –YISHAYAH (ISAIAH) Chapter 61 verse 10 to Chapter 63 verse 9

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ The Haftorah begins very positively as Yishayah continues to comfort the people. He describes the great elation that everyone will experience at the time of the Final Redemption, comparing it to the joy a newly married couple brings.
- ✚ The Haftorah continues with a description of the punishment Hashem will mete out to Edom and anyone else who has been an enemy towards Israel.
- ✚ Yishayah concludes with one of his most famous quotes "In all Israel's afflictions, He, too, is afflicted, and the angel of His presence redeemed them...". Hashem feels the pain of His people; just like a loving father who is sharing the pain his child is going through, and awaits the moment when redemption arrives and everyone will be able to live in peace.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ This week's Haftorah is the seventh and final instalment of the seven Haphtarach's of Consolation.
- ✚ In the Parsha Moshe comforts Bnai Israel by telling them Hashem will never forsake them even during their times of golus (exile). Yishayah is relaying the same message here by reiterating the fact by saying that one day soon, Moshiach will arrive and the walls of Jerusalem will be rebuilt back to its former glory.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION:

For me, it's no accident that on the Shabbat preceding Rosh Hashanah the Sedra opens with, "Atem Nitzavim Hayom Kulchem Lifnei Hashem Elokeichem," you stand firmly all together today, before Hashem your lord", because it is setting the tone that everyone of us will be soon standing before Hashem, on Yom Kippur; trembling with awe and trepidation waiting to hear Hashem's final verdict of whether we will be placed in the book of life and be blessed with a good year or has v'shalom are not.

On the day of Moshe's death, he gathered the entire nation to stand before Hashem and redefine the covenant they were about to begin with Him anew. The commentators explain that this was a covenant of 'arvus', literally defined as taking a collective responsibility for one another. The word 'Nitzavim' means standing in a strong, firm manner. Our Sages explain that, on a deeper level, Nitzavim is teaching us how we'll be able to confidently stand strong and firm before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgment, not as an individual unit but as part of a collective.

Rosh Hashanah is the anniversary of creation. Every year on this day Hashem reconsiders His creation. Should I continue my endeavour or should I destroy it. Is my creation working out or is it no longer worth the effort to keep sustaining it? On this day the entire world stands before Hashem in judgment; everything and everyone, from angels to insects, is subject to a review. As we say in the Rosh Hashanah prayers "Today the word trembles, today He will bring to the court of judgment all the formations of the worlds."

Moshe's message was clear and direct; he was telling Bnai Yisrael the following: Your behaviour during the past year is about to be reviewed on this day. It's true our misdeeds are going to be placed under the piercing glare of Divine scrutiny and we cannot deny our guilt as we tremble with shame and remorse. However if you seriously accept the responsibilities of being a guarantor by connecting yourself not as individuals but to the nation at large, it will make it easier for us all to stand confidently, united as one, before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah in order to receive a more favourable outcome.

On this Shabbat before Rosh Hashanah, before our trial even begins, Moshe is telling us not to panic because we still have time to repent and to do Teshuva because after all Hashem would love us all to return back to him in order to prevail and succeed in the future. How comforting is that.

