

Main Identity

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Subject: Netvort: parshas Nitzavim- Vayeilech, 5769

Parsghas Nitzavim is read evry year on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah, either alone, or together with parshas Vayeilech, as will be done this year. We have shown, in the past, some connections between these two parshiyos, which have relevance to the theme of teshuvah, or repentance(literally 'return'), which is so much on our minds at this time of year. I would, however, like to suggest a further connection, inspired, as was last week's message, by material found in Rabbi Yehudah Shaviv's work ,MiSinai Ba.

Rabbi Shaviv points out that, just as in last week's parshas , the word 'hayom', meaning today, occurs a number of times, so too, does it occur in paershas Nitzavim. For example, in the opening verses of the parsha, " You are standing today. all of you, before the Lord, your God, ... for you to pass into a covenant of the Lord, your Gos, and into His oath that the Lord your God forges with you today, in order to establish you today as a people to Him and that He be a God to you.." (Devarim, 29: 9-12). .Rabbi Shaviv asks, if the covenant is, ias the Torah goes on to say, eternal, why is the word 'hayom' used so much. He gives a number of answrrs, but I would like to focus on the one he gives based on the writings of Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav .

Rebbe Nachman, in Likutei Moharan, 2, 272, writes that the verse in Psalms 95:7) , " today, if you hearken to His voice , " constitutes a central principle in our service of od. he verse is telling us that in whatever activity we are engaged in at the moment, whetyher in terms of our pursuit of a livelihood, or in a specific service of God, our thoughts should concentrate on that activity, as it pertains to this day and this moment, alone, and not think of what will happen tomorrow, or during another activity.. The reason for this, says Rebbe Nachman, is that the corpus of our sevice to God is so overwhelming that when a person considers it, he may put some things off until the next day, because he feels it is too much for him. By concentrating on one's crrent activity, he will find it manageable.

Rav Kook, however, in his work Mussar Avicha (39-40), presents this same teaching, but gives it a different explanation. He says that whatever activity a person is engaged in at the moment is the activity through which God makes Himself available to him. .Therefore, when he is praying, he should try to connect with God through understanding the prayers he is saying as deeply as he is able to. Similarly, when his studies Torah, He should try to connect with God by understanding the depth of the Torah he is studying at this moment. This principle, writes Rav Kook, applies to all of the mitzvot that a person performs, and is alluded to in the Talmud, Tractate shabbos, 10a, which says " the time for Torah stands alone, and the time for prayer stands alone." This approach to our service of God can serve as a guide for all enerations in maintaing tits eternal covenant with God.

Based on Rav Kook's approach to our service of God, we can now suggest a connection between parshas Nitzavim and parshas Vayeilech, that carries a message for us in these crucial days, in which we try to deepen our relationship with God. In the beginning of parshas Vayeilech, Moshe addresses the nation, on the last day of his life and tells them, I am one hundred twenty years old today" (Devarim, 31:2). Although the midrash as cited by Rashi, explains that Moshe used the word 'today' to indicate that he was born on the same day that he would die, perhaps we can suggest that he was also reminding them of the importance of this day, and this moment, in our service of God. Moshe himself was to engage in many activities that day, including according to the rabbis, the writing of several Torah scrolls, and his message to the nation was that just as he was, now, concentrating on bidding farewell to them, as an act of kindness, and would later, that day, concentrate on other areas of service to God, so, too , should they adapt this approach in their service of God.

The entire Netvort staff wishes a kesivah vechasimah tova, and good inscription and sealing, for the coming year, to everyone in Netvortland, and to the entire Jewish nation.

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