Points to Ponder

Netzavim 5779

**אַתֶּ֨ם נִצָּבִ֤ים הַיּוֹם֙ You are all standing here (29:9) - Rashi** notes that there is a connection between the current Parasha and the last one. For when Bnei Yisroel heard the Tochacha, they got scared and were ready to give up. Moshe told them not to give up because despite the fact that they have angered Hashem in the past, he didn’t wipe them out until now. But was Moshe implying that the Tochacha was just words? That it had no meaning? **Rav Leib Chasman ztl** explains that the purpose of the Tochacha was to open our eyes. When we walk around with a sense of complacency then the Tochacha happens. Our job is to open our eyes and change our actions to create the best awareness of Hashem in everything we do. If we are successful, we will stay off the Tochacha.

**כִּ֛י בִּשְׁרִר֥וּת לִבִּ֖י אֵלֵ֑ךְ When he hears the words of this covanent and blesses his heart that he will be ok being complacent (29:18) - Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz ztl** was once walking in Yirushalayim during the hot summer,  and passed a funeral procession. He inquired as to the person being buried and, upon learning the name of the Niftar, noted that he knew the person and thought he was young. He was told that the person had died of the chills (Pneumonia). He asked how one could get the chills in the midst of the intense summer heat. The students told him that the person had gotten the chills in the winter and did not take care of himself properly and, as a result, passed away in the summer after a chronic struggle. Rav Chaim exclaimed that he also has “cooled off” not from the winter but from the Yamim Noraim. This, he told the students, was not a good thing. We need to understand that Gezeiros are made on Rosh Hashana and we need the excitement of the Tefillah at that point for the rest of the year.

**מִתַּ֖חַת הַשָּׁמָֽיִם From under the heavens (29:19)** - What is added in noting that the person will be wiped out from under the heavens? **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl.** explained that the Jewish nation can never be wiped out insofar as we are above the heavens. However, one who does not want to enter the Bris with Hashem is thus, beneath the heavens and ripe for destruction.

**וְהַנִּגְלֹ֞ת ֹלָֹ֤נוֹּ ֹוֹּלְֹבָֹנֵֹ֨יֹנֹוּ֨ עַד־עוֹלָ֔ם  The hidden (sins) are for Hashem, but the revealed (sins) are for us and our children forever, to carry out all the words of this Torah (29:28)- Rav Mordechai Willig Shlita** noted that Hashem does not punish *Am Yisroel* for the hidden thoughts or sins of individuals. However, we are required to destroy the evil of revealed sins from our midst. Otherwise, the entire community will be punished. We cannot accept deviation form Torah values from within our midst. How, then, can we maintain our own limited community in a postmodern world which denies absolute truth, at a time when punishing and cursing wrongdoers are not viable options?  First, we must make Torah life exciting and attractive. We can no longer take observance for granted in an open global marketplace of competing ideals and values. Second, we must adapt the biblical precedent of proclaiming sinful activity as unacceptable. While we can no longer punish or curse offenders, we can, and must, excoriate sinful activity. We must distinguish between the person and the action. The purpose of this last activity is preservation and strengthening of the existing Torah community. The formulation of timeless principles in a trendy world has the additional benefit of proclaiming the essence of Torah Judaism before the entire world. After all, all of the nations talk about us and our covenant with Hashem.

**וּמָ֨ל Hashem will circumcise your heart (30:6)** - What does this even mean? Milah is not on the heart, it is performed on the Orlah!? **Ramban** explains that in the time of Moshiach there will be no desire for anything that holds us back from understanding and doing the will of Hashem. **Rav Michel Yammer Shlita** explained that the entirety of Teshuva is not the introduction of something new within our lives. It is the removal of the thought that we cannot change or improve that makes a difference.

**בְּפִ֥יךָ וּבִלְבָֽבְךָ֖ לַֽעֲשׂתֽוֹ: It is within your heart and mouth to achieve (30:14)** - What is the connection between the heart and doing? The **Chasam Sofer** explains that this Possuk speaks about Teshuva and when we speak of Teshuva, done properly, it turns wanton Averios into Mitzvos — as if one DID the Mitzva. That is the connection between the heart and doing. Your heart of Teshuva converts the actions into actual Mitzvos.

**אֶת־הַֽחַיִּ֖ים וְאֶת־הַטּ֑וֹב וְאֶת־הַמָּ֖וֶת וְאֶת־הָרָֽע: Behold I have placed before you TODAY life and good (30:15)** - Why is the word Hayom in the possuk? What does it add**? Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl** explains that the Torah is trying to remind us that we make the choices of life and good each and every day. Lest one think s/he can be complacent and assume that just because in the past s/he has chosen wisely, it is a new choice each time.

**Haftara: בְּכָל־צָֽרָתָ֣ם | ל֣וֹ צר In all of their troubles it caused Him pain (Yeshayahu 63:9) - Rav Schachter Shlita** highlighted the difference between the way this Possuk is written and the way it is read. It is written as Lo (not) that Hashem doesn’t have distress in our distress but it is read as Lo (to him) showing that our distress in exile bothers Hashem also. The **Chida** notes that this idea -- Galus HaShechina -- is based on the idea that when someone goes into Ir Miklat (also known as Galus), his teacher needs to go with him. Hashem is our Rav, he is with us even in Galus. (Rav Schachter added that once the person can leave Ir Miklat, even if he doesn’t want to, his Rebbe does not go with him. Rav Schachter added that the idea of Galus HaShechina may also work that way and once we CAN go into Eretz Yisrael, we SHOULD because the Shechina is already staying there.)