Points to Ponder

Vaeschanan/Nachamu 5778

 **רב לך Enough! Do not speak to me about this matter (3:26) – Rav Nosson Tzvi Wachtfogel ztl.** notes the power of prayer given to man. Even when it appears that his prayers are not to be answered, man should pray again. Indeed, Moshe davened 515 Tefillos (the gematria of Vaeschanan) and Hashem had to tell him to stop or He would need to listen to the prayer. This is consistent with the Gemara in Berachos (32a) which tells us that there is no reason to give up hope but rather to strengthen and try again (Kaveh El Hashem). There are times that we do not seem to get answered from Hashem not because we do not deserve it but rather because Hashem is trying to get us to daven again – harder.

 **לא תוסיפו על הדבר אשר אנכי מצוה אתכםDo not add to the word which I command you, nor diminish from it, to observe the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you (4:2)** – The Torah is opposed to amendments. Why does the Torah repeat the Mitzvos of Baal Tosif and Baal Tigra twice? **Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted the **Gra** who noted that the Mitzva of Sefiras HaOmer is repeated twice too. He explains that like the Mitzva of Sefirah there is Baal Tosif and Baal Tigra on an individual and on a communal level. Similarly, the Tochachah is both individual (Bechukosai written in the plural) and communal (Ki Savo). The original Bris at Har Sinai, everyone was an individual but in Arvos Moav, the people were finally united into a single entity.

 **כי מי גוי גדול אשר לו אלהים קרובים אליוFor what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is at all times that we call upon Him? (4:7)** – How could Moshe say this when his own Tefillah was not answered? **Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein Shlita** explains that Moshe’s Tefillah WAS answered. He desired to enter the land in order to fulfill the Mitzvos connected to the land (See Sotah 14a). The Gemara notes that only the places that Moshe saw became actively part of Eretz Yisrael in regard to the rules of Terumah and Maaser. In essence, it was through him that these Mitzvos were achieved. Similarly, we will come to a time when it will appear as if our prayers are not heard. However, we are encouraged to look more closely. We will quickly discover that our true prayers ARE indeed accepted and received and answered fully.

 **ויבחר בזרעו אחריו And he chose his seed after him and brought you, with His great strength from Egypt (4:37) – Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** learned a powerful lesson from the selection of this section as the Torah reading for Tisha B’Av as opposed to that of the Miraglim. He suggested that no matter what has happened and how hard we have fallen, Hashem has not and will not ever abandon us. He cannot abandon us because we are the Am HaNivchar. We are GUARANTEED to seek Teshuva and rekindle our relationship with Him. Indeed, He has selected us precisely because of our ability and desire to select Him.

 **הטיבו אשר דברוThey have done well in that which they asked (5:25) –Rashi** explains that Moshe was upset with the people because they were more willing to use an intermediary rather than to speak with Hashem directly out of love. **Rav Haim Sabato Shlita** explains that Moshe could not understand how a nation would ever give up a chance to serve Hashem through love, a level perceived to be higher than that of fear. As Kli Yakar explains, fear makes distance while love brings close. Still, Hashem sides with the people. How? Rav Sabato explains that we need both elements in order to achieve complete service of Hashem. If we only had love or fear, we would not be able to fully access our awareness of the relationship. In turn, when the time for fear would be needed, we would not be prepared. By developing both connections, Hashem told Moshe that the people were correct.

 **ואהבת את ה' אלקיך And you will love Hashem your God with your complete heart (6:5)** – The Talmud (Berachos 54a) notes that we need to serve Hashem with both our Yetzer Hara and Yetzer HaTov. How does one serve Hashem with his or her Yetzer HaRa? **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank ztl.** explains that when we see how the Yetzer HaRa affects our desire NOT to do something – we know how important it is to go follow that path. **Rav Dov Yaffe ztl.** adds that the way that our Yetzer Hara tries to get us not to review our learning shows us how important it is to specifically set about to review.

 **בכל נפשךWith your entire soul (6:5) – Rashi** explains that even if He is taking your soul you need to serve him. **Rav Don Segel Shlita** explains that this language is specific. For when one offers his soul to Hashem, it is clear that the action is service to Him. However, when one submits his soul to Hashem, not necessarily willingly, and still is able to love Hashem – this is a tremendous level of Ahavas Hashem that we are commanded to aspire to.

**Haftorah: על הר גבוה עלי לך Upon a lofty mountain ascend, O herald of Zion, raise your voice with strength, O herald of Jerusalem (Yeshayahu 40:9)** – Who is the Mevarsseret Tzion and who is the Mevaseret Yirushalayim? **Rav Schlessinger Shlita** quotes **Rav Kook ztl.** who explains that 2 separate groups speak of Eretz Yisrael and of Yirushalayim. Both are enamoured with her. One speaks of a secular city and land with freedom and liberty and nationality. The other, speaks of holiness and Kedushat HaAretz. The voice of the secular love for the homeland of the Jew is loud and heard far and wide. The voice of Kedushat HaAretz is not as loud – heard primarily in the shuls and Battei Midrash. Yeshayahu calls to the people and asks them – why do you speak of a nationalism only like other nations. Al Har Gavuha Ali Lach – carry Jewish nationalism to a spiritual height. Hareemee BaKoach Koleich – to the spiritual seekers he tells them to raise their voices to be heard even beyond their current reach.