

Torah Talk – מאמרי תורה



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Parashat Nitzavim
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פרשת נצבים
כ"ח באלול תשע"ח

Torah Reading: *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) 29:9-30:20

In this *parasha*, Moshe describes the *brit* (covenant) between Hashem and *Bnei Yisrael*, urging *Bnei Yisrael* to uphold the *brit* and honor the Torah so that they may be rewarded with life in the land of Israel.

This *parasha* contains an eternal promise, giving us hope even today (Chapter 30, verses 1-6):

א והיה כי-יבאו עליך כל-הדברים האלה, הברכה והקללה, אשר נתתי, לפניך; והשבת, אל-לבבך, בכל-הגוים, אשר הדיחך ה' אלהיך שמה. ב ושבת עד ה' אלהיך, ושמעת בקלו, ככל אשר-אנכי מצוך, היום: אתה ובניך, בכל-לבבך ובכל-נפשך. ג ושב ה' אלהיך את-שבותך, ורחמך; ושב, וקבצך מכל-העמים, אשר הפיצך ה' אלהיך שמה. ד אם-יהיה נדחך, בקצה השמים--משם, יקבצך ה' אלהיך, ומשם, יקחך. ה והביאך ה' אלהיך, אל-הארץ אשר-ירשו אבותיך--וירשתה; והיטבך והרבך, מאבתיך. ו ומל ה' אלהיך את-לבבך, ואת-לבב זרעך: לאהבה את-ה' אלהיך, בכל-לבבך ובכל-נפשך--למען חייך.

1 And it shall come to pass, when all these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you shall think of yourself among all the nations, where Hashem your God has driven you, **2** and you shall return to Hashem your God, and listen to Hashem's voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart, and with all your soul; **3** that then Hashem your God will turn your captivity, and have compassion upon you, and will return and gather you from all the peoples, where Hashem your God has scattered you. **4** If any of you that are dispersed be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there will Hashem your God gather you,

and from there will Hashem fetch you. **5** And Hashem your God will bring you into the land which your ancestors possessed, and you shall possess it; and Hashem will do you good, and multiply you above your ancestors. **6** And Hashem your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love Hashem your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live.

On this last Shabbat before *Rosh Hashana*, before we begin in earnest the process of *cheshbon hanefesh* (taking account of our deeds) and *teshuva* (returning [to God]), the Torah reminds us that no matter how dire our situation may seem, no matter how far from “home” we may feel, we have the power to control our own fate. If we do what is right, Hashem will bring us “home” and will “do [us] good.”

We read in the prayer *Unetaneh Tokef* on *Rosh Hashana* and again on *Yom Kippur*, “ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזרה – *u'teshuva u'tefillah u'tzedakah ma'avirin et ro'ah ha'gezairah* – ...but repentance and prayer and righteous giving will avert the evilness of the decree.” *Teshuva* (repentance) establishes a better connection with ourselves through introspection and life changes. *Tefillah* (prayer) creates a closer connection to God through communication with the Divine. *Tzedakah* (righteous giving) increases the kindness of the world by improving our relationship with others.

If we accomplish these things, we will return to the Land and reap the goodness of it, not as a reward, but as a natural result of being in sync with the world as it should be.

From all of us at MILTON, Shabbat Shalom and *Shana Tova*.

For Discussion:

- Think of one aspect of your behavior that you would like to change or improve upon. What is it? What specific actions could you take to make these changes and improvements?
- Which is your favorite prayer? Why? Perhaps you can make a commitment this year to be more rigorous about saying that prayer on a regular basis.
- If you had \$100 to give to *tzedakah*, to which organization(s) or individual(s) would you contribute? Why did you make that particular choice(s)?