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Yishai ben Avraham v'Sarah

Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelekh

[Deuteronomy 29:9-31:30](#)

September 6, 2018

Summary

This week we are reading *Parashat Nitzavim* from *Sefer Devarim*, the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 29, verses 9-11.

In this Torah portion, every Israelite gathers to hear more of Moshe's closing words. They are told that they all have a share in G!d's covenant. Once again they are warned of the consequences for not observing the *mitzvot*, but they are also told that G!d will accept anyone who sincerely wants to and tries to do better.

Towards the end of this *parasha* Moshe offers the Israelites words of encouragement, saying that understanding and following the instructions we find in Torah is not beyond the abilities of our brains or our bodies. Moshe reminds the Israelites that the words of Torah are in their mouths and in their hearts. Even if we might see that understanding Torah or living according to the *mitzvot* in Torah can be challenging, it is within our reach.

Moshe then tells the Israelites that that, although G!d is bringing them to them the Promised Land, they will only be able to continue to live there if they listen to G!d's instruction and be careful that their **hearts do not turn to false G!ds**. Moshe calls heaven and earth to see that G!d is putting the choices of life and death, blessing and curse before the Israelites. Moshe then gives the Israelites the tip, "Choose life so that you and your children may live."

Questions

1) After Moshe reminds the Israelites, *again*, that their behavior has consequences he tells them that understanding Torah and living a life of Torah is not mysterious to them and is not far away from them. Why might Moshe want the Israelites to know that Torah is understandable and not far away? What is the difference between something being understandable and something being not far away? <<Pick 3>>

When Moshe calls Torah understandable I think this is saying that it is possible for everyone to learn Torah. When Moshe tells the Israelites that Torah is not far away, this means that you can reach it, but it might take some hard work.

2) Moshe then goes on to explain what it means that Torah is understandable and not far away. In the next *pasuk* Moshe says that Torah is in your mouth and in your heart. What might it mean for Torah to be in your mouth or to be in your heart? What do you think is the difference between Torah being in your mouth and in your heart? <<Pick 3>>

When Torah is in our mouth, it's a little like when I chanted Torah this morning or when we talk about Torah in class. Having Torah in our mouths can be a way of connecting ourselves with other people who care about Torah, want to talk about it, and have Torah in their lives.

When Moshe tells the Israelites that they have Torah in their hearts, I think he is telling them that they understand Torah and that its stories and teachings are meaningful to them.

3) After reminding them to that doing *mitzvot* will have positive consequences and not doing *mitzvot* will have negative consequences, G!d then gives the Israelites the encouragement that Torah is understandable and within reach--maybe so that they would feel like they could do the *mitzvot* and would want to try. Can you think of a time when you had hard work to do and someone gave you encouragement that helped? What was the encouragement you received and what made it helpful?
<<Pick 3>>

I don't always feel like reading the books that we have at my house, but when my cousin told me a summary of the *Land Of Stories* and lent me her set, that encouraged me to read even before I had opened up the book. Because of her encouragement, I read a whole lot more than I would have otherwise.

Why are there crowns or “*tagin*” on some Torah letters?

A little confusing but the best source I could find and definitely reputable:

<http://hasoferet.com/cbh/2012/04/01/tagin-the-crowns-on-the-letters-of-the-torah/>