

א ביסל תורה!

The Maimonides School Parsha Newsletter

כ"ב אלול תשפ"ג-9/8/2023

נצבים-וילך

abisltorah.wordpress.com

הקהל of מצווה

By Binyamin Orkaby

In פרשת וילך we are given the מצווה of הקהל. The מצווה of הקהל was performed once every 7 years on the סוכות following the year of שמיטה. The תורה tells us that everyone would come to ירושלים to witness the הקהל. As the פסוק says "הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנָּשִׁים וְהַטָּף" all of Israel, the men, the women, and the young children." The מצווה of הקהל itself was performed by the king. The king of ישראל would read the פרשת הקהל, which was a reading from several different parts of ספר דברים, in the בית המקדש. One question asked, with regards to the מצווה of הקהל is why is הקהל performed during סוכות in the year immediately following שמיטה?

The יקר offers one reason for why the מצווה of הקהל is performed right after שמיטה. He says that most arguments are caused by monetary debts and since there had just been a שמיטה which canceled all debts people would not be arguing with one another and there would be a sense of אחדות between all of בני ישראל.

The מעם לועז brings down a beautiful answer to this question. The first is that the goal of the שמיטה is to show a person that this world is like nothing, as during שמיטה a person's property is הפקר (ownerless), and the goal of this world is עבודת ה'. Furthermore during the סוכות of חג we live in impermanent dwellings, our סוכות, which is again a model of how this world is but a fleeting moment and that our entire life in this world is but a temporary stay before we ascend to עולם הבא. By catching the people in this moment of intense belief and understanding, the people will more easily be able to hear and accept the message of הקהל, about the importance of serving ה'.

The חזקוני offers a wonderful message as to why הקהל is performed at the beginning of the year. He comments that by having הקהל at the beginning of the year since people will hear the תורה of ה' they will be motivated to continue to engage with, and uphold, the תורה.

As we enter the weeks before ראש השנה we can take with us these messages of אחדות, understanding that this world is temporary, and the idea of starting something on the right foot, and use them to improve ourselves. Whether that means working on our גאווה, pride, or understanding that you are part of a greater whole of ישראל the key is to start on the right foot. Go into the coming year understanding that you can grow and improve, and consequently you will.

Editors: Binyamin Orkaby and Ephraim Fischer
Faculty Advisor: Rabbi Jaffe



Write a Dvar Torah for א ביסל תורה



Sign Up to Get א ביסל תורה by Email

תשובה The Simplicity of

By Ephraim Fischer

In this week's פרשה, פרשת נצבים, ה', through משה, tells the Jewish people all about תשובה. In the beginning of the second עלייה, we see the prophecy which says that when the curses predicted in last week's פרשה befall the Jews, all they need to do is תשובה, and ה' will take them back into His arms. From there, ה' will bring them back into Israel and make it a prosperous land for them. Later in the פרשה, we see a more general case for תשובה. The two prefacing פסוקים tell us, "כִּי תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁמֹר מִצְוֹתָיו וְחֻקֹּתָיו הַכְתוּבָה בְּסֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה כִּי תִשׁוּב אֶל־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל־לִבְבְּךָ," "וּבְכָל־נַפְשְׁךָ: כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֶנֶכִּי מֵצוּן הַיּוֹם לֹא־נִפְלְאת הוּא מִמֶּךָ וְלֹא רְחֹקָה הוּא:" The first פסוק teaches us that a variety of blessings will come upon us, as soon as we follow the תורה and repent to ה'. The second פסוק teaches that what was commanded to us in the previous פסוק, that is תשובה, is not far from us. A few פסוקים later, we see a very well known פסוק, "כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלַיךְ הַדְּבָר מְאֹד בְּפִיךָ וּבְלִבְבְּךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ:" פסוק. For the thing is very close to you, it is in your mouth and heart to do it. This פסוק sparks a large question. This "thing" seems to be תשובה, but the תורה said earlier that תשובה isn't far from us! Why is the תורה repeating it again?

The נצי"ב learns from this פסוק that originally, the תורה was telling us with what ease we could do תשובה, that it wasn't far. However, here, when the תורה says that תשובה is close to us, it is telling us why it is so close. The נצי"ב interprets that the reason it's so close to us is because we're Jews. Intrinsically, the soul of a Jew is a soul full of תורה, so it's built into us to want to do תשובה. תשובה is easily within our reach because ה' made each and every one of us with a love for תורה, and He would hate to see us turn away. Once we realize this, we can incorporate the second half of this פסוק into our lives: "בְּפִיךָ וּבְלִבְבְּךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ," in your mouth and your heart you should do it. We need to do תשובה to the fullest extent possible. We can't just say our תשובה, we must internalize it and keep it in our hearts.

With ראש השנה coming next week, I'd like to share one more insight about תשובה in this week's פרשה. One of the main phrases used in this week's פרשה to describe תשובה is "לָלֶכֶת בְּדַרְכּוֹ," to follow His path. This metaphor of our actions following a path goes much deeper. In fact, renowned author עגנון ש"י brought down a story of a certain Chassidic Rabbi who told his students a parable: There was once a man who got lost in a forest, and he did not know where the right path was. He stayed put for a matter of days, until another traveler came across him. He asked the traveler, "Where should I go? I've been lost for days now!" The traveler responded, "I don't know where to go either, as I have also been lost for days. However, no matter where I am, I can tell you that on this path we're lost. Let us go find a new path." The Rabbi said, "This is us. The path that we are on is the wrong path, and on this path, we are lost. Now, before ראש השנה let us find a new path." This story reminds us of a פסוק earlier in the פרשה: "לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הוּא לֵאמֹר מִי: "יְעֹלָה־לָנוּ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְיִקְחָה לָנוּ וְיִשְׁמַעְנוּ אֹתָהּ וְנַעֲשֶׂנָּה: It is not in the heavens that you should say, "Who can go up to heaven and get for us [the correct way to live] and tell it to us and we will do it?" This פסוק is teaching us again that תשובה is not so far fetched. It is not in the heavens, and it is not far away. Rather, it is here on earth, right in front of us. The first man lost in the forest decided to stay put, which gained him nothing. He thought that the correct way to get out was out of his reach, so he kept on his wrong path. Meanwhile, the second person realized that no matter what, staying on this path is wrong. We need to switch paths, and the way to do that is right in front of us. Both the פסוק of קָרוֹב אֵלַיךְ and this פסוק make it apparent that תשובה is right in front of us, and it can have a tremendous impact on ourselves.

With ראש השנה right around the corner, תשובה is a necessity. During the month of אלול, we say that "המלך בשדה", the king is in the fields. This means to say that ה' is down on earth with us, so our תשובה has an even greater effect than in the rest of the year. We must take advantage of this fact and ask for תשובה, because after all, "כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלַיךְ," it is very close to us.