



September 12, 2020

כג אלול אב תש"פ

Parashat Nitzavim-Vayelech - Deuteronomy 29:9-31:30
 Stone – p 1086 Hertz – p 878 Etz Hayim – p 1165

Haftarah – Isaiah 61:10-63:9
Seventh Week of Consolation
 Stone – p 1202 Hertz – p 883 Etz Hayim – p 1180

Talmud Class—cancelled
Minchah – cancelled
Seudah Sh'lishit—cancelled
Shabbat Ends – 7:58 PM

DAILY SERVICE TIMES—until further notice

Sunday—8:30 AM
 Tuesday—6:30 PM
 Thursday—7:00 AM
Shabbat—9:30 AM

TRADITIONAL CONGREGATION

Rabbi Seth D Gordon – Rabbi.Gordon@yahoo.com

Rabbi Ephraim Zimand z"l, Emeritus

Marian S. Gordon, Executive Director – tradcong@sbcglobal.net

DAILY SERVICE TIMES—until further notice

Sunday—8:30 AM

Tuesday—6:30 PM

Thursday—7:00 AM

Shabbat—9:30 AM

Board of Directors:

Elaine Farkas, President

Paul Tesser, Executive Vice President

Ellis Frohman, Financial Vice President

Marty Levy, Ritual Vice President

Florence Schachter, Education Vice President

Chris Brown, Membership Vice President

Steven Puro, Administration Vice President

Steve Roufa, Building & Grounds Vice President

Dina Rinder, Youth Vice President

Lori Tesser, Treasurer

Mimi Levy, Secretary

Past Presidents

Jerry Chervitz, Alan Rosenberg, Phil Brick, Boaz Roth, Cyndee Levy, Kenneth Bohm

Members at Large:

Steve Bell

Stanley Estrin

Shelah Feldman

Bill Gold

Gary Golden

Ari Levy

Carol Max

Justin Zeid

*Traditional Congregation welcomes new members. If someone you know
would like to receive membership information, please contact
Chris Brown, Membership VP, at 636-288-5356*

On This Week's Torah Portion – Nitzavim-Vayelech

See - I have placed before you today life and good, and death and evil, that which I command you today, to love Hashem, your Gd, to walk in His Ways, to observe His commandments, His decrees, and His ordinances; then you will live and you will multiply, and Hashem, your Gd, will bless you in the Land to which you come, to possess it. But if your heart will stray and you will not listen, and you are led astray, and you prostrate yourself to the gods of others and serve them, I tell you today that you will surely be lost; you will not lengthen your days upon the Land that you cross the Yarden to come there, to possess it. I call heaven and earth today to bear witness against you: Life and death I have placed before you, blessing and curse, and you shall choose life, so that you will live, you and your offspring – to love Hashem, Your Gd, to listen to His voice and to cleave to Him, for it is your life and the length of your days, to dwell upon the Land that Hashem swore to your forefathers, to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Ya'akov, to give them. (30:15-20)

Or haChaim wonders, in verse 15 it says *life and good, and death and evil*, whereas in verse 19 it says, *Life and death I have placed before you, blessing and curse*. In the first verse, likes are paired, while in the second verse opposites are paired, and the clause "I have placed before you" intervenes between the pairs.

In truth, however, the purpose of the verse is to make us aware that [when verse 15 mentioned four promises, two of good and to of bad,] two promises – one good and the other bad – are in this world. Thus it says in this verse [v. 19], Life and death have I placed before you, that is, the reward and punishment that are placed before you, i.e. in this world, are life and death; if the people will act properly they will live [long] and if they act wickedly, they will die [early]. ... And there are another two, namely blessing and curse, and those are promises for the World to Come; blessing and curse are not before the person, but only are experienced after death. ...

This is why the verse concludes its statement: and you shall choose life, which is the promise of reward in this world, for a person's heart is more focused upon what is before him...

I think Torah and Or haChaim are describing a very fundamental dichotomy and challenge that we have as human beings. Human beings are the junction point between the outer, physical, material world on the one hand, and the inner, spiritual world on the other. The body, which is responsible for interfacing the soul with the material world, pulls in the outer direction, while the soul, which is a "Portion of Gd on High," strives to reunite with its transcendent source – it pulls in the inner direction. Note that neither direction is unequivocally good or bad. What we are required to do is to strike a balance between the two. Thus, both *life and death* pertain to this world (the outer world) while *blessing and curse* pertain to the World to Come (inner world). Therefore, when Moshe exhorts us to choose life, he does not expect us to abandon this world and devote ourselves entirely to the inward direction. Rather, he exhorts us to hear/listen to/obey Gd's Voice. If we do that, we get both inner and outer rewards, and vice versa.

Now we have seen that listening to Gd's Voice means Torah study. Torah study has a surface value – learning the laws that we have to obey Gd's Will. This study deals with the outer values of compliance with Gd's Will – determination of right action through analysis of the principles of *halachah* and their applications. The limitation of this approach is that it is impossible to analyze every situation from first principles while trying to act in the real world – events move faster than our ability to analyze them. Therefore, codes of conduct have developed that allow us to navigate the great majority of situations, and we have access to Rabbis and scholars to help with the more difficult cases. This is what we have been doing for the last two millennia, with mixed results – we have survived, but often just barely.

The deeper level of Torah study takes an inward approach. The most profound level of Torah is the "supernal Torah," which is the blueprint of creation, the script, so to speak, that Gd used when he spoke creation into existence. It resides in the transcendental, most inward level of life. We can experience this level of life in our own consciousness by allowing our mind to settle down and cease all its activity, transcending thought, feeling and perception. When we repeat this process of transcending often enough, our mind and body become accustomed to maintaining the transcendental value of awareness along with waking, dreaming and sleeping.

Since this transcendental level is where the "supernal Torah" is found, and since all thought and action is based on the level of our consciousness, it follows that all our thoughts and actions will be in accord with this "supernal Torah," which is the most holistic and integrated expression of Gd's Will. In such a situation Gd's Voice and Gd's Will are so woven into the fabric of our awareness that it is virtually impossible for us to contravene Gd's Will, and we can therefore expect both outer, material flourishing, and inner, spiritual growth, as Torah promises.

The trick here is to get the mind to settle down to this transcendental level. Since the transcendent is infinitely expanded and infinitely charming to the mind, it should go there automatically. The issue is however, that we normally project the mind outward so that we can interact with the world. There is nothing inherently wrong with that, but it has to be supported by an inner counterweight. If there is no such support, our action is cut off at its root and it becomes weak, fearful, and likely to deviate from the path Gd has prescribed for us. So, as Moshe Rabbeinu tells us, we have a choice: balance our outer experience with the experience of the transcendent and enjoy life in accord with Gd's Will and the concomitant blessings in both worlds, or the opposite. It's a pretty obvious choice, isn't it?

L'Shanah Tovah UM'vorechet and Shabbat Shalom!
Rafi Rabinoff

**Join Rabbi Gordon on Zoom!
Something for everyone!**



Mondays, 9:00 - 10:00 AM

The history of the Jewish people. Newcomers are welcome to join us!

[Register here](#)

Wednesdays, 7:00 - 8:00 PM

A look at the weekly Parashah from both traditional rabbinic and midrashic points of view as well as modern historians.

Although we would love you to join us for all classes, you can join the lesson for that week's reading. Recommended: the New JPS translation, but feel free to use any translation.

[Register here](#)



The 613 Mitzvot

Thursdays, 12 - 1:00 PM. Bring your lunch!

More than a "good deed," mitzvah in a deeper and truer sense means, literally, command.

Teachings from Sefer ha-Chinuch will be provided; this work numbers the mitzvot as they appear in the Torah, adding rabbinic teachings and the author's own insights. Recommended:

Have a translation of the Torah with you.

[Register here](#)

Fridays, 6:30 - 7:00 PM.

Abbreviated services (including L'cha Dodi; though not Shabbat evening services) and the singing of Zemirot. Benefits include spiritual ones as we enter Shabbat, congregational togetherness before Shabbat, and learning about what we are singing.

[Register here](#)



**VIRTUAL LEARNING
WITH
RABBI GORDON**



PRAYER

Now is the time to let the mind search backwards like
the raven loosed to see what can feed us.

*Now, the time to cast the mind forward to chart an
aerial map of the months.*

*Rosh Hashanah is a great door that stands across the
evening and Yom Hakkipurim is the second door.*

*Between them are song and silence, stone and clay pot
to be filled from within myself.*

I will find there both ripeness and rot, what I have done
and undone. What I must let go with the waning days
and what I must take in.

With the last tomatoes, we harvest the fruit of our lives.

Marge Piercy

THOUGHT FOR THE MOMENT OF SILENCE

May you live as long as you want,
And never want as long as you live!

Unknown