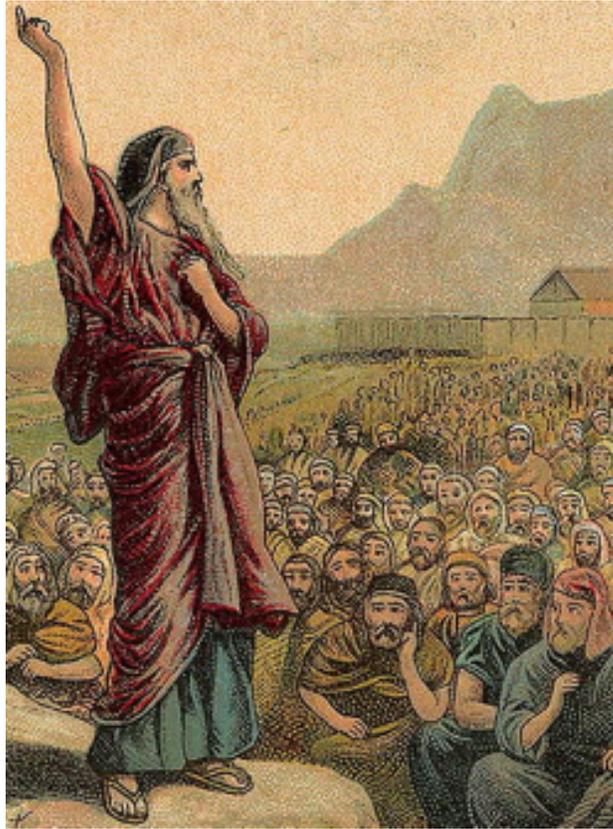


## NITZAVIM (you are standing)



**Deuteronomy 29:10** You stand this day before יהוה your Elohim; your captains of your tribes, your elders and your officers, *and* all the men of Israel. C-MATS

**Question:** What is important about the verse, “You stand this day before יהוה your Elohim?” You have provoked the Omnipresent to anger many times, yet He has not made an end to you. Instead you still exist before Him [“standing... before יהוה”]. יהוה has made light for you, and He will again make light for you in the future. And the curses and sufferings preserve you and enable you to stand before Him [the curses, by preventing you to stray from serving Him, and the sufferings, by cleansing you of your sins].

**11 Your little ones, your wives, and your stranger that is in your camp, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water:**

**Question:** What does this verse teach us? We are all equal in יהוה’s eyes-no matter what our position in life may be. Moses divided the people into categories to suggest that everyone is responsible according to how many others he or she can influence. Leaders may be able to affect masses of people; women, their immediate families and neighbors; children, only a few friends and classmates; common laborers, hardly anyone. יהוה does not demand more than is possible, but He is not satisfied with less (Or HaChaim).



**Question:** Why are woodcutters and water drawers mentioned here? Canaanites came to Moses and pretended to be members of a far-off nation who wished to convert to serving יהוה. Because they were not sincere about accepting יהוה, Moses did not allow them to convert. Nevertheless, he let them remain with the nation as wood-hewers and water-drawers for the Tabernacle (Rashi).

**Question:** יהוה says that all people are equal in His eyes. יהוה judges us as we judge others. What do you think this means? Our attitude toward others is the measuring stick that יהוה uses to measure us and respond to our behavior. When we are forgiving to others even when they mess up, יהוה views us the same way and vice-versa.

**Question:** Is there anything that is 'unforgivable?' יהוה is the ultimate fair judge and sees to it that everyone eventually is rewarded for his good deeds, faces the consequences of his misdeeds and is compensated for his losses. Therefore, while we certainly are ethically allowed to prevent ourselves falling victim to other's damaging behavior, we should adopt an attitude of forgiveness and leave the rest in יהוה's capable hands.



Smile

**Question:** Smiling at someone is a more valuable gift than giving them a costly present. What does this mean? A sincere smile is more than just a turning of the lips-it infuses the person we smile at with powerful and healing energy that reaches their very heart. What mere 'present' could compete with that?

**Question:** Is it appropriate to act kind towards people who aren't kind to us? While we certainly don't have to allow people to harm us in any way-people's unkind behavior needn't make us become like them. Nearly always things turn out better with others if we remain kind and nice-and for sure it will make us feel better about ourselves.

**Spiritual Exercise:** At least one time today, smile at someone you normally wouldn't and make the world a nicer place.



The Covenant

**12 That you may enter into covenant *with* יהוה your Elohim and into His oath, which יהוה your Elohim makes with you this day:**

**Question:** Why is this scripture adjacent to the curses? Because when Israel heard these ninety-eight curses delineated besides the forty-nine curses stated in Leviticus (26:14-38), they turned pale, and said, "Who can possibly endure these?" [Thereupon,] Moses began to appease them [as follows]:

**13 That He may establish you today as a people to Himself, so that He may be to you an Elohim, as He said to you and as He has sworn to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.**

**14 Not only with you do I make אֶת this covenant and this oath;**

**15 But אֶת *with him* that stands here with us this day before יהוה our Elohim and also with *him* that is not here with us this day:**

**Question:** Who is “him that is not here with us this day”? Us-the future generations. The covenant was binding even on unborn generations who were not present to enter into it, because parents and children are like trees and their branches. Just as the potential of all branches is contained in the parent tree, so future generations are contained, as it were, in the parents who will give birth to them, and are bound by the parental covenant. Also all Israelites souls were present at this covenant, just as they were at Sinai when the Torah was given. Only the bodies were not yet born (R' Bachya). יהוה wanted to indicate that their elders were responsible to assure that the children would be raised as Israelites (Sforno). The future of the יהוה's people depends on the education of its children in Torah.

16 (For you know אָתְּ how we have lived in the land of Egypt; and how we passed through the nations;  
17 And you have seen אֲתָם their abominations and their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which were among them)

18 So let there not be among you a man, woman, family, or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from יהוה our Elohim to go and serve אֲתָם the Elohims of these nations (*gentiles*); let there not be among you a root that bears bitterness and wormwood;

**Question:** How can we keep the root of bitterness out of our life? Heb 12:14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be righteous; without righteousness no one will see יהוה. 15 See to it that no one misses the grace of יהוה and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Heb 13:5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because יהוה has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." 6 So we say with confidence, "יהוה is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" 7 Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of יהוה to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. 8 Yahshua is the same yesterday and today and forever.



Wormwood

**Question:** What is wormwood? This refers to a root that produces a bitter herb. Historic references to wormwood go back as far as 1600 B.C. in Egypt. Wormwood leaves contain absinthin a substance which can be toxic to other plants. You may have heard of the alcoholic drink "absinthe" a green colored beverage that is now illegal in most countries. And rightfully so as it has been said that the painter Vincent van Gogh was drinking absinthe when he cut off his ear and sent it to a woman. The absinthin being water soluble will wash off the leaves and leach into the soil interfering and stunting the growth of plants in close proximity to the wormwood. Here, then, the verse means: "Someone who produces and increases evil among you."



Vincent Van Gogh

**Question:** How will יהוה add to the punishment? Because I will add to him the punishment for what he committed unintentionally, which I would have overlooked, but now, he has caused Me to combine them with the intentional sins and punish him for everything.



Do not secretly say in your heart.

**19** If a man hears אָתּ the words of this curse (oath), and he blesses himself secretly in his heart saying, “I will have peace even though I walk in the imagination of my own heart doing what I want to do and will be added to the watered (righteous) אָתּ although dry (sinful)”

**Question:** How is a person in danger who says, “I will have peace even though I walk in the imagination of my own heart doing what I want to do”? This is the source of disaster: the delusion that "peace will be with me, so I can do as I wish without fear; calamities can only befall other people." Many seem to base their lives on the foolish notion that certain kinds of people are prone to die, but not them -- they are immune from physical or spiritual death.

**Question:** What does “watered” and “dry” mean in this verse? "Watered" is a metaphor for unintentional sin, because when a person has had too much to drink and becomes intoxicated, he may sin without being aware of what he is doing. "Dry" (thirsty) is a metaphor for intentional sin, because a thirsty person is rational and seeks means of satisfying his craving. When a person falls prey to the delusion that he is free to do as he pleases -- peace will be with me -- יהוה holds him responsible even for his unintentional sins (watered), since they are the result of indifference to the seriousness of a sin. The punishment for those sins is then added to the punishment for his intentional (thirsty) sins (Rashi).



The anger of יהוה will burn against you.

**20** יהוה will not spare him, but the anger of יהוה and his jealousy will burn against that man and all the curses that are written in this book will settle upon him and אָתּ יהוה will blot out his name from under heavens.

**Question:** Where did you get your name? A person's name is of heavenly origin, because יהוה influences the parental choice of the name they give a child. The name symbolizes the spiritual forces that its bearer can release if he acts properly, but when he becomes caught up in sin, that name is erased from its lofty source under the heavens. (Or HaChaim).

21 And יהוה will separate him for adversity out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the Torah:



Sodom and Gomorrah

22 So that the coming generation of your children and the stranger that will come from a far land will say when they see אֵת the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which יהוה has laid upon it;  
23 And the whole land *becomes* burning brimstone and salt, so *that* it is not sown or bear *crops*, and no grass grows there, like *the* overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which יהוה overthrew in his anger and in his wrath:



Sodom and Gomorrah today

24 All the nations will say, “Why has יהוה done this to this land? What is the meaning of such furious great anger?”

25 Then men will say, “because they have forsaken אֶת־ the covenant of יהוה Elohim of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt:

26 Because they went and served other gods and worshipped them, gods *whom* they did not know and whom He had not given to them:

**Question:** Who decides who will govern the nations? יהוה assigned a degree of control over earthly functions to His heavenly forces, but He apportioned these powers only to the angels that regulate the affairs of other nations. Israel, however, is not under the sway of heavenly forces, only under יהוה Himself (Sforno; see comm. to Leviticus 18:25).

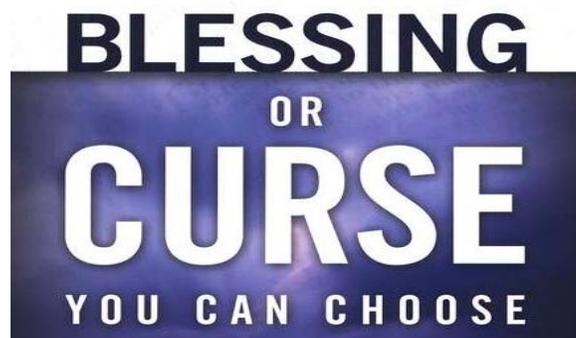
27 And the anger of יהוה was aroused against this land to bring upon it אֶת־ all the curses that are written in this book:

28 And יהוה rooted them out of their land in anger and in wrath and in great indignation and cast them into another land as *it is this day.*”

29 The secret things *belong* to יהוה our Elohim: but those things which are revealed *belong* to us and to our children forever, that we may do אֶת־ all the words of this Torah.

**Question:** How are we responsible for the revealed sins around us? We are responsible for detecting the sins committed openly in our community, and to eliminate any evil among us. If someone in your family sins, you should go to him and confront him about his sin in love and maybe he will repent.

**Question:** What does “the secret things belong to יהוה our Elohim” mean? Moses reassures the nation that hidden sins are the responsibility of יהוה alone to judge, and He holds no one responsible but the sinners themselves. We are responsible for detecting the sins committed openly in our community, and to eliminate any evil among us. And if we do not execute judgment upon these open transgressions, over which we do have control, then the whole community will be punished because they would be negligent in their responsibility. (Rashi; Ramban) This verse also alludes to the fate of Israelites who had become so absorbed among other peoples that their Israelites origins had become forgotten. When the final redemption comes, these hidden ones known only to יהוה will be reunited with the rest of the nation and be restored to the status of their forefathers (Rashi to Psalms 87:6)



**Deuteronomy 30:1** And it will come to pass, when all these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you will remember *them* when you are among all the nations where יהוה your Elohim has banished you,

**Question:** What encouragement does יהוה give His people? After the fearsome warnings of what will befall the nation when it is disloyal to יהוה, the Torah turns to the eventual benevolence that יהוה will shower upon His people when they repent. These promises have not been fulfilled as yet; they will come about in the Messianic era.



**2** And return to יהוה your Elohim and obey His voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul;

**3** Then יהוה your Elohim will reverse אֶת־ your captivity and have compassion upon you and will return and gather you from all the nations, where יהוה your Elohim has scattered you.

**Question:** What does "will return" mean in this verse? The Hebrew word used here for "he will return" is not veheishiv -- which means "he will bring back" -- but veshav, which literally means "he will come back." The Divine presence resides among Israel, even in all the misery of their exile, and when the Israelites are redeemed, יהוה speaks of it as His own redemption -- He Himself returns along with Israel's exiles. יהוה Himself will literally take each individual believer with His very hands out of his place. Thus the verse says "And you will be gathered up, one by one, O children of Israel" (Isaiah 27:12).

**Question:** יהוה forgives those who strayed from Him once they sincerely repented. We can learn from here to forgive other people, too. Is there a spiritual outlook that can help us to forgive others? It is a spiritual fact that nothing can happen to us and no one can do anything to us unless it's יהוה's will. It is also so, that יהוה only sends us what is for our ultimate best (even though we can't see it that way). Therefore, if someone says or does something unkind to us, we can remember he is only an 'agent' of יהוה's will and therefore it will be easier to forgive.

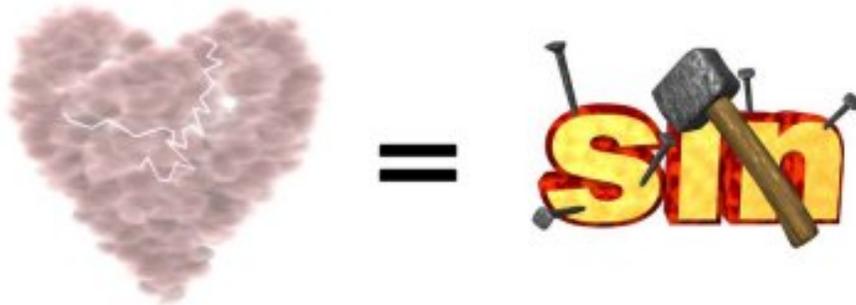


At the far end of the sky

4 If *any of you* are driven out to the far end of the sky, from there will יהוה your Elohim gather you and from there He will bring (*carry*) you:

5 And יהוה your Elohim will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed and you will possess it; and He will do good *things* for you and multiply you beyond your fathers.

foreskin of heart



Circumcise your heart

6 And יהוה your Elohim will circumcise אֶת־ your heart and the heart of your descendants to love אֶת־ יהוה your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live (*refreshed*).

**Question:** What does it mean to “circumcise your heart.”? From the time of the creation of the universe, man had the choice to be righteous or wicked. So it was for the entire duration of the Torah, in order that there be merit for us in choosing good and punishment for desiring evil. But in the days of Messiah, the choosing good will be in our nature, and the heart will not lust for that which is not proper for it and have no desire for it at all. This is the "circumcision" spoken of here, as lust is a "foreskin" blocking the heart, and the "circumcision of the heart" is the removal of lust. In those times man will return to what he was before Adam's sin, when he naturally did what is proper to do and there were no conflicts and contradictions in his will.

**7** And יהוה your Elohim אָתְּ all these curses will He put upon your enemies and on them that hate you, who persecuted you.

**8** And you will return and obey the voice of יהוה and do אָתְּ all His commandments, which I command you this day.

**9** And יהוה your Elohim will give you more than enough in everything you set out to do, in the fruit of your body and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your land will all do good: because יהוה will again rejoice to see you do well, as He rejoiced over your fathers:



Listen to the voice of יהוה

**10** If you will listen to the voice of יהוה your Elohim, to keep His commandments *and* His statutes, which are written in this book of the Torah, and if you turn to יהוה your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul.

**11** Because this commandment which I command you this day *is* not too hard for you or beyond your reach.

**Question:** Is it possible to keep the commandments today? Yes, it is not too hard for you!!! Do not become discouraged. Repent and turn away from what you know you did wrong and get up and begin again.

**Question:** Do you think feeling discouraged affects our physical ability to succeed? Our attitude toward something has a big impact on our likelihood of success. A person who feels discouraged is unlikely to be able to access the physical abilities he or she would otherwise have.

**Question:** Why do you think that sometimes others can encourage us more than we can encourage ourselves? It is nearly impossible to see ourselves objectively. Many times, negative feelings can make things that are within our grasp seem to be impossibly out of reach. Someone looking from the outside can often have a clearer picture and encourage us to see things in a different, positive light.

**Question:** Are there times that we shouldn't encourage someone to accomplish his goal? If we feel that their goal could harm themselves or others, we shouldn't encourage it. But other than that, we do people a big favor by encouraging them.



Encouragement heals the heart.

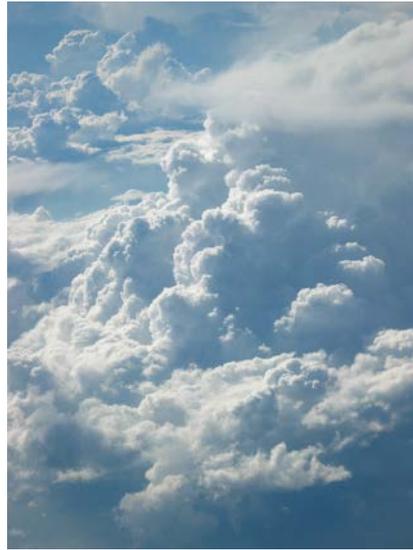
**Spiritual Exercise: Encouragement goes straight to the heart.** In fact, the word itself comes from a combination of the prefix “en” which means “to put into” and the Latin word “cor” which means heart. Knowing what a big difference encouragement makes in your own life, what can you do to help others “to take heart” when the going gets tough and way feels long?

**Question:** How can you encourage others?

1. **Become aware of what encourages you**, and do those same things for others.
2. **Learn individuals’ “love language”**- The five love languages are: words of affirmation, spending quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service and physical touch.
3. **If an encouraging thought comes to mind, share it!**
4. **When you introduce someone, add a few words of praise** for the person’s abilities, accomplishments, about how they’ve helped you or about the nature of your relationship. It’s encouraging to be praised in front of others.\*
5. **When someone is discouraged or hurting, offer specific, practical help.**
6. **Remind fellow believers of the specific promises of יהוה.**
7. **Write someone a note** to tell them that you’re praying for them.
8. **Make celebration a more regular part of your relationships.**
9. **Be specific when you offer words of praise**; it makes your encouragement more credible and concrete “You did a great job at...” “I really appreciate that you...” “I was really impressed that you...”
10. **Realize the power of presence.** Just being there is encouraging!
11. **If you really want to encourage someone** who gives you excellent service, write a letter of commendation to the person’s boss.\*
12. **We could learn something from the way team athletes freely pat, touch and high-five each other in competition.** Touch is a powerful encouragement.
13. **When you see someone making positive changes in their lives, affirm them.** “You seem to have a really great attitude about...” “It may be that I’m just starting to take notice, but I see that you’re...” “Do you think that you are becoming more...?”
14. **Tell people how they’ve encouraged you!**

**12 It is not in the heavens, that you should have to say, “who will go up for us to the heavens and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?”**

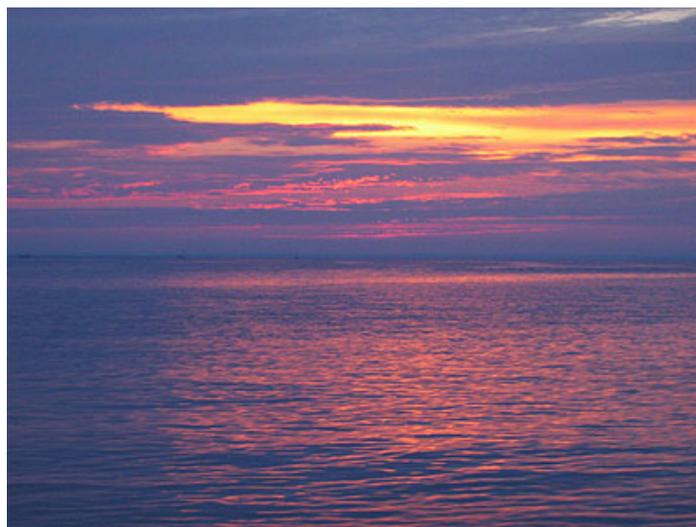
**Question:** What does it mean “**who will go up for us to the heavens**”? You do not need a prophet to bring you heavenly messages before you can come close to יהוה. Yahshua came down to you to bring you the Truth, because you could not come up to Heaven to receive the message.



You do not need to go up to heaven to find the Truth.

**13 Neither is it beyond the sea that you should have to say, “who will cross over the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?”**

**Question:** What does it mean “**who will cross over the sea for us and bring it to us**”? It is not necessary to seek out the greatest scholars in the world who may be across distant seas. יהוה will teach you His Torah if you read it and seek Him.



You do not need to cross over the sea to find the Truth

**Question:** Should we give up when something becomes challenging? Many times when we set out to do something worthwhile, it won't be easy and it is tempting to quit, especially if there seems to be a good excuse to do so. But we gain and grow so much by pushing on, nevertheless.

**Question:** Who do you think lives a happier life - someone who allows good excuses to stop him or one who doesn't? There is no dream, no worthwhile accomplishment, that doesn't at some point present itself with a good excuse to give up. Only a person who keeps going anyway will achieve the great joy of accomplishing his dreams.

**Question:** What does it mean to rationalize? It is a process of using our mind to generate excuses to allow us to do what we want even if it's not right. This type of excuse-making can really hold a person back from spiritual growth and we should always be on the lookout to avoid it.

**14 But the word *is* very near to you, in your mouth, and in your heart that you may do it.**



**Question:** What does it mean by “in your mouth and in your heart”? The heart recognizes where one has sinned and the mouth confesses it. Both recognition and confession of sin are prime ingredients of repentance (Sforno). A fetus is taught the Torah in the womb, and is caused to forget it at birth (Niddah 30b). But if he is not to remember it, why was it taught to him? Thanks to this prenatal teaching, every Israelite has a kinship with the Torah, and even someone who never had the privilege of studying the Torah may be inspired with instinctive wisdom. When such a person is given the opportunity to study, the Torah will not be something foreign to him, but something he once knew. This is what Moses meant when he said that the Torah is not hidden or distant, but that it is in every Israelite’s mouth and heart (R' Yosef Dov Soloveitchik).

**15 See, I have set before you this day ~~חַיִּים~~ life and goodness and death and adversity (*evil*);**



Walk in His Ways

**16 In this I command you this day to love יהוה אלהיך your Elohim, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, so that you may live and multiply: and יהוה your Elohim will bless you in the land which you *are going* to possess.**

**17 But if your heart turns away, so that you will not listen, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them;**

**18 I announce to you this day, that you will certainly perish and *that* you will not live *very* long upon the land when you pass over ירדן Jordan to go *in* to possess it.**

**19 I call as a witness this day אלהי שמים ואלהי ארץ heavens and earth against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life that *both* you and your descendants may live:**

WE ❤️

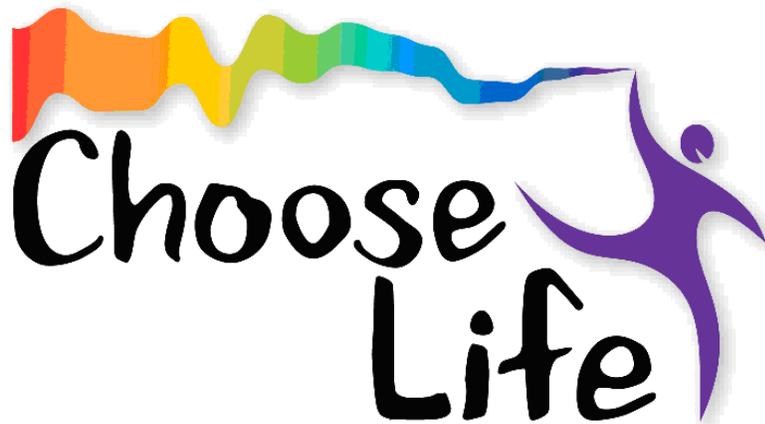
FREEDOM OF CHOICE

**Question:** Does man have freedom of choice? Freedom of choice has been granted to every man: if he desires to turn toward a good path and be righteous, the ability to do so is in his hands; and if he desires to turn toward an evil path and be wicked, the ability to do so is in his hands. This concept is a fundamental principle and a pillar of the Torah and its commandments. As it is written [Deuteronomy 30:15]: "See, I have set before you life [and good, and death and evil]" and "See, I set before you today [a blessing and a curse]".

**Question:** Is there any situation where we do not have free choice? While it is true that things can happen that leave us no alternative how to act, yet there is no situation when we are left without any free choice. It could be that our choice is what to say, or even our attitude about what's happening. As human beings, we are always free to choose on some level.

**Question:** Do you believe that animals also have free choice? While animals may appear to make certain choices - a cat may choose to walk or sit still, a dog may choose which of two foods to eat - they are simply responding to their natural instinct. The cat is tired, or wants to catch a bird. The dog likes one food better than another. This is not called free choice, which is a uniquely human phenomenon. Free choice is a value-based choice that often compels us to go against our natural instinct. It's a moral decision between good and evil. For instance, I may like a certain food better than another, and I could easily take it, but I choose to leave it because I want my friend to enjoy it. This is not the kind of choice that an animal will ever make.

**Question:** Does everyone have same range of free choice or does it differ among people? Each of us has our own free choice range. This means that according to our age, personality and experiences, we all have an area where we are equally pulled by competing values and may freely choose to which we will respond. For instance, for a child growing up in an inner city broken home, whether to rob a store or not is a difficult moral choice. For someone else, it would be out of the question, whereas his moral choice might involve whether or not to return extra change he has been given. It is how we choose in our own personal free choice range that determines whether or not we are growing spiritually.



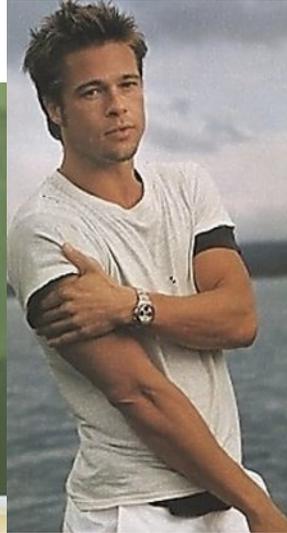
**Question:** Why does יהוה remind us to “choose life”? Nowadays with so many types of entertainment to choose from, such as video games, TV, movies, and all the exciting new technology that seem to be springing up everyday, we can get lost in fantasy and almost forget about our real lives. Things like video games, TV, movies, etc., are designed to get a person excited. They simulate situations that, if they really happened in our lives, would be terrifying. But since in the end, these games aren't really a part of our real lives, a person ends up getting all excited about nothing. These games can be fun for a while. But sooner or later, we all want more. We find that we want to put our energy into things with real meaning, and that when we do, it's much more interesting than any video game or movie. **This is called "choosing life."**

**Question:** Would you say that it's necessary to be exposed constantly to new and different people and things for life to be interesting and exciting? Or can a person still feel that way around the same people and places everyday? When we see the same people and places everyday it's easy to get used to them. But in reality we only have to look deeper and we can see the wonders that יהוה has put into the everyday. Next chance you get, pick up a flower or even a leaf and look at it. Really look at it. You might be amazed at the awesome detail and incredible design that you see. Poets and artists are able to see this way and find the spectacular within the everyday things. Scientists teach us that the inner workings of the most simple flower or insect contain wonders that boggle the mind. Each person you meet is like a world waiting to be discovered. Life around us is amazing once we open our eyes.



Drugs will not help you escape.

**Question:** Unfortunately we often hear of people who become caught up in dangerous habits and self-destructive behavior. They claim that they engage in this behavior in order to "escape." From what do you think they're trying to escape? Do you think they succeed? Life can be challenging. יהוה put us in the world and designed our lives to include many challenges. When we face these challenges and try our best to meet them, we grow as people. This is spiritual growth and while at times it can be uncomfortable or even painful, it can be the most valuable and meaningful part of life. Of course, there is always the temptation to try to escape or sidestep these challenges by blurring our minds and numbing ourselves with drugs and alcohol to what is uncomfortable in reality. But ultimately this technique is about as effective as the ostrich who buries its head in the sand when it sees a lion. Sooner or later all challenges must be faced in order to grow. How much better to face them with our eyes open.



Who is more important a teacher or movie actor?

**Question:** In your opinion, who do you think is doing a more important job: a teacher who spends long days helping kids to learn to live happier and fuller lives, or a big movie star, who spends his free time on the beach? The teacher.

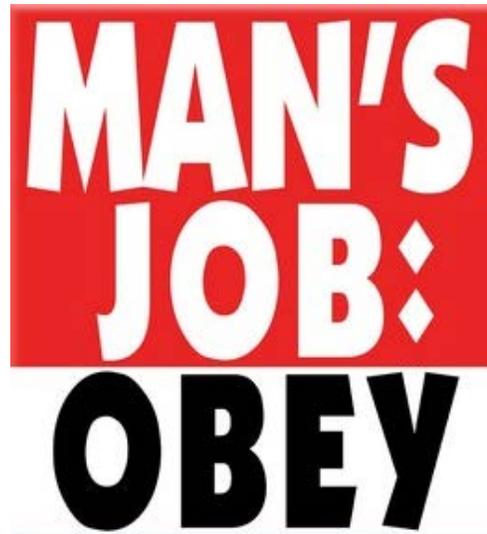
**Question:** Which one do you think receives more money and fame? The actor.

**Question:** How do you explain this? It can happen that those who are the real heroes of our society can be overlooked and at the same time somebody else doing something that in a real sense is not very important is considered a "star." One of the reasons is that the work that the real heroes are doing, although more important, doesn't always seem as glamorous as the movies. Also, people who are genuinely interested in helping others and helping to make the world a better place often aren't so concerned about their own fame and fortune. They know that what they are doing has real meaning in their eyes and in the eyes of **יהוה**. This is enough of a reward for them. People like this, even if nobody ever hears of them, really make the world a better place.



Heaven and earth are witnesses of **יהוה**'s warning.

**Question:** Who did יהוה call as witnesses that He had warned us of what would happen if we did not keep His commandments? Heaven and earth exist eternally, so that whenever Israel may sin, the witnesses will be available to testify that the people were warned of the consequences. יהוה wants Israel to draw a lesson from heaven and earth. Heaven and earth are not rewarded or punished, but they never move away from the functions יהוה ordained for them. Should not Israelites, who are rewarded for performing the commandments, be zealous in fulfilling יהוה's will? (Rashi).



**MAN'S  
JOB:  
OBEY**

**20 That you may love יהוה אלהיך your Elohim and that you may obey His voice and that you may cling to Him: for He is your life and the length of your days: that you may live in the land which יהוה swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them.**

**Question:** How should you love יהוה? By definition, love of someone means that one cares only to be attached to the object of one's love, without any selfish concerns. Since the way to achieve love of יהוה is by studying the Torah, such study must be purely for the sake of the Torah, not because it can lead to personal benefit of any sort. Someone who studies the Torah with other motives loves himself, not the Torah, and therefore will not come to love יהוה (Maharal to Nedarim 62a). A person should love יהוה with such great and powerful intensity that his soul is bound in this love and is constantly pursuing his love, just as one who is smitten with lovesickness. This is what King Solomon meant when he said by way of metaphor, "For I am sick with love." Indeed, the entire Song of Solomon is a metaphor for the concept of his lovesickness for יהוה.



PROMISES

**Question:** What promises do we the exiles have?

1. You will return to יהוה with all your heart and with all your soul.
2. You will listen to His voice
3. Our children will listen to His voice.
4. יהוה will bring back the exiles to the Land
5. יהוה will have mercy upon you.
6. He will dwell in your midst.
7. You will take possession of the Land
8. He will do good to you
9. He will make you more numerous than your forefathers
10. יהוה will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring
11. יהוה will place all these curses upon your enemies.
12. You fulfill all His commandments
13. יהוה will make you abundant for good in all the work of your hands, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your soil.
14. יהוה will once again rejoice over you for good, as He rejoiced over your forefathers,

## VAYELECH (and he went)

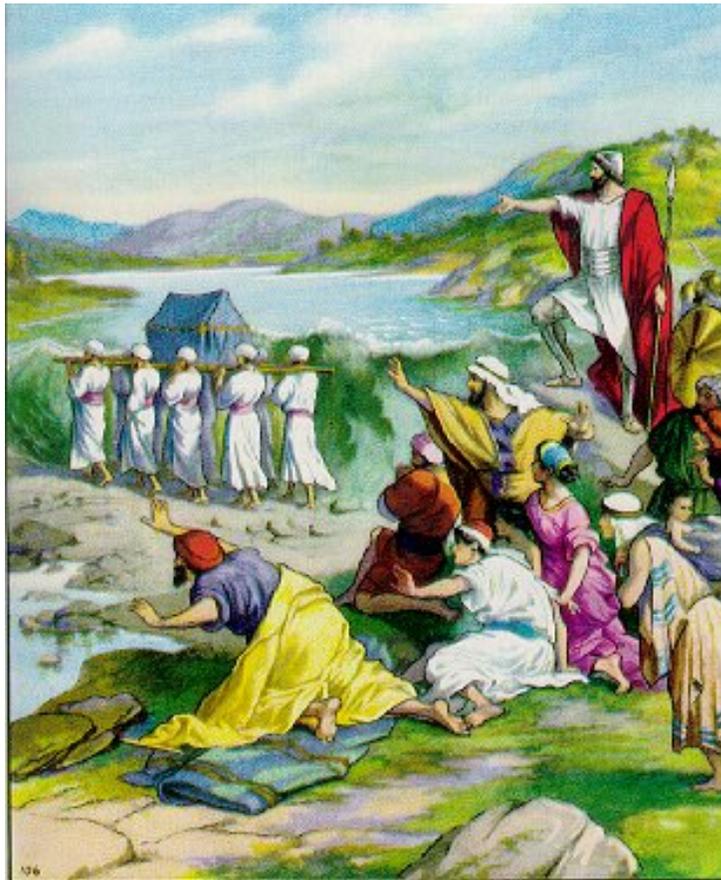


**Deuteronomy 31:1** And Moses went and spoke אֵת these words to all Israel.

**2** And he said to them, “I *am* 120 years old this day; I cannot go out and come in anymore: also יהוה said to me, ‘you will not cross over אֵת Jordan this day.’”

**Question:** Why did Moses say “**I am 120 years old this day**”? Today my days and years were fulfilled; on this day I was born (Moses’ birthday), and on this day I shall die... This is to teach us that יהוה fulfills the years of the righteous to the day and to the month, as it is written (Exodus 23:26): "I shall fulfill the number of your days."

**Question:** What does it mean by “**I can not go out and come in anymore**”? Did this mean physically he was too old to go into the Promised Land? Scripture states regarding Moses, “His eye had not dimmed, nor had he lost his natural moisture” (Deut. 34:7) which teaches us that his powers were intact even on the day of his passing. So what then is the meaning of “I can no longer”? Here it means: “I am not permitted,” because authority was taken from him and granted to Joshua.

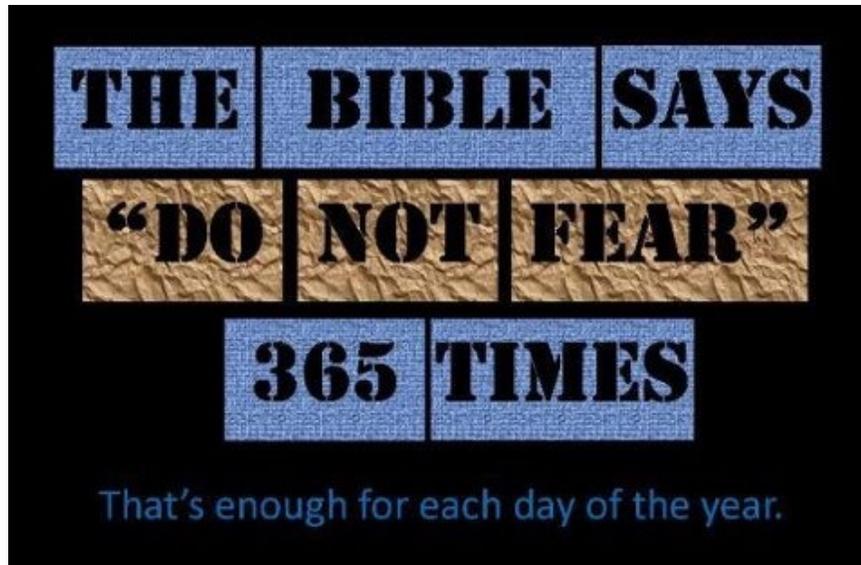


Joshua crosses the Jordan

**3** יהוה your Elohim will cross over before you and He will destroy אֵת *these* nations from before you and you will possess them: and Y’hoshua will cross over before you as יהוה said.

**4** And יהוה will do to them as He did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and their land, whom He destroyed.

**5** And יהוה will defeat them ahead of you, so that you may do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you.



**6 Be strong and be bold, do not fear, or be afraid of them: because יהוה your Elohim goes with you; He will not fail you or forsake you.” 7 And Moses called to Y’hoshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “be strong and be bold: because you must go אֶת with this people to the land which יהוה has sworn to their fathers to give them; and you will cause them to inherit it.**

**Question:** What commandment did Moses give Joshua? Does this commandment apply to us today? Moses called Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous! Do not fear, and do not be dismayed." We too must be strong and courageous and overcome all temptations to sin. We must not fear men but trust יהוה in all things.

**Question:** Does worrying help us reach our goal? Worrying wouldn't help us to reach our goals. You have the best chance if you try your hardest while trusting in יהוה. Worrying is an unproductive waste of energy.

**Question:** Are we really in control of whether we get nervous or not or does it just happen? There are some situations, such as taking a test where there is a lot on the line. It is only natural that in times like this we will feel tense or nervous, and that's okay. But we do have the ability to take control of that feeling and not let it carry us away. If we give ourselves positive messages that everything will work out for the best, and if we remember that יהוה is always by our side, we can really make many of these nervous feelings disappear.

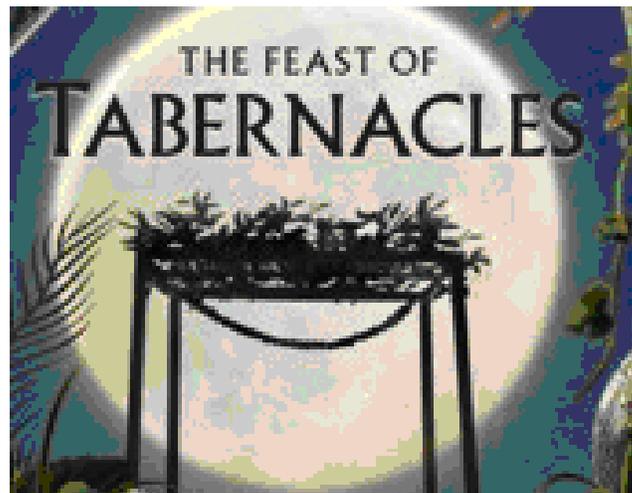
**Question:** What is the difference between fear and worry? While the two feelings may be similar there are some crucial differences. Fear is a natural reaction to a genuine threatening or dangerous situation that exists in the present. It is the body's way of preparing itself for "fight or flight," to give it extra energy to face up to or escape from the situation. Worry tends to produce in us similar sensations when there is no immediate or real danger. Often it focuses on past events that no longer threaten us, or dwells on possible future problems (what if... etc.) which may never materialize. Whereas appropriate fear can be constructive and energizing, worry weakens us and makes us less effective.



**Question:** Is there a connection between a person's level of faith, or trust in יהוה, and his ability to stop worrying? Faith is a realization that we are not alone when facing challenges. We understand that יהוה is with us to help us deal with them successfully, and that He has also placed the challenge before us as an opportunity to grow. As long as we put in our best effort, we can rest assured that whatever results will be for our best. When we see things in this light, there is no longer any reason to worry, and life becomes much more manageable.

**8** And יהוה goes before you; He will be with you, He will not fail you, neither *will He* forsake you: do not fear or be dismayed.”

**9** And Moses wrote אֶת־ *this* Torah and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore אֶת־ the Ark of the Covenant of יהוה and to all the elders of Israel.



**10 And Moses commanded them saying, “at the end of every seven years during the Feast of Tabernacles, according to the law of the year of release,**

**11 When all Israel comes to appear אֶת־ before יהוה your Elohim in the place which He will choose, you will read אֶת־ Torah, that day before all Israel so they can hear it.**

**Question:** Who reads the Torah to the people at the end of every seven years? The king reads to the entire nation from Deuteronomy. While reading the book of Deuteronomy to the people every seven years at the Feast of Tabernacles, the king would sit upon a wooden platform that was erected in the courtyard of the Temple and the entire nation would come together and listen to the king read to them. The reason for this commandment is that the primary foundation of Israelites life is the Torah, and through it Israelites are distinguished from all other nations to enjoy the highest possible spiritual pleasure. This being so, it is fitting that all Israel -- men, women, and children -- should come together to hear it read as a national affirmation that the Torah is our foundation, majesty, and splendor (Rambam, Hil. Chagigah 3:3; Chinuch 612).

**12 Gather together אֶת־ the people, men and women and children and your stranger who lives within your towns, that they may hear and learn and fear אֶת־ יהוה your Elohim and observe and obey אֶת־ all the words of this Torah:**



Jordan River

**13 And their children, who have not known these laws, may hear and learn to fear אֶת־ יהוה your Elohim, as long as you live in the land when you cross over אֶת־ Jordan to possess it.”**

**14 And יהוה said to Moses, “see, your day has come that you must die: Call אֶת־ Y’hoshua and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge.” And Moses and Y’hoshua went and presented themselves in the Tabernacle of the congregation.**



Joshua and Moses before יהוה

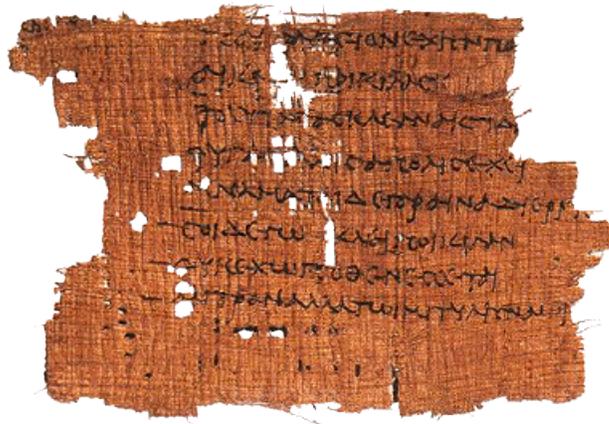
15 And יהוה appeared in the Tabernacle in the pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the Tabernacle.

16 And יהוה said to Moses, “you will sleep with your fathers; and this people will rise up and go whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land where they *are going* and will forsake Me and break אה My covenant, which I have made with them.

17 Then My anger will be aroused against them in that day and I will forsake them and I will hide My face from them and they will be devoured and many evils and troubles will befall them; so that they will say in that day. ‘*Haven’t* these evils come upon us, because our Elohim *is not among us?*’

18 And I will certainly hide My face in that day, because of all the evils they have done by turning to other gods.

**Question:** What does יהוה mean by “I will certainly hide My face in that day”? There are times when יהוה hides His face. But then there are times when יהוה hides His face and we don't even realize that His face is hidden; we dwell in darkness, and think it is light.



Teach the Israelites this song.

**19 Now therefore write אֶת־ this song and teach it to אֶת־ the sons of Israel: have them learn it by heart, so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel.**

**Question:** Why is the next Torah section called a song? Haazinu is called a song because Israelites always chant it and it is written in the form of poetic verse (Ramban). It was written as a song so they could sing it to their children.

**20 For when I have brought them into the land, which I swore to their fathers that flows with milk and honey; and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat; then they will turn to other Elohim and serve them and provoke Me and break אֶת־ My covenant.**

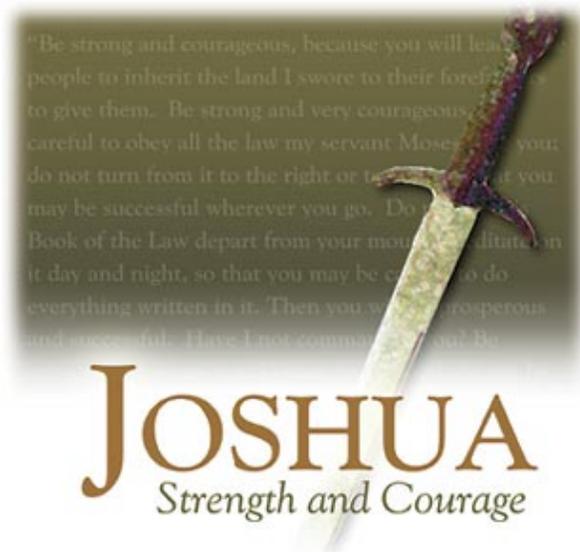
**Question:** Why did the Israelites turn to other gods in times of abundance? Should this be a warning for us? They will eat and be satisfied, and live on the fat of the land-have abundance. We should seek יהוה with all our heart even in times of abundance to insure that we never turn away from Him.

**21 This song will testify against them as a witness after many evils and troubles have come upon them; because it will still be recited by their descendants and they will not have forgotten it: because I know אֶת־ their imagination (how they think) even now before I brought them into the land which I swore.”**

**Question:** What promise does יהוה give to His people? Despite the starkness of the prophecy that Israel will slide into sin and make יהוה angry, there is this comforting promise that the Torah will never be completely forgotten (Rashi). History shows over and over again that there was a revival of Torah study after times when it seemed as if its decline was irreversible.

**22 Moses therefore wrote this song on the same day and taught it to אֶת־ the sons of Israel.**

**23 And He commissioned אֶת־ Y’hoshua the son of Nun and said, “be strong and be bold: because you will bring אֶת־ the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them: and I will be with you.”**



24 After Moses finished writing **את** the words of this Torah in a book,  
25 Moses commanded **את** the Levites, who carried the Ark of the Covenant of יהוה, saying,  
26 “Take **את** this book of the Torah and put it next to the Ark of the Covenant of יהוה your Elohim,  
that it may be there for a witness against you.  
27 I know **את** your rebellion and how stiff neck you are: even while I am still alive with you today you  
have been rebellious against יהוה; and how much more will you do so after my death?  
28 Gather to me **את** all the elders of your tribes and your officers that I may speak to them in their  
ears **את** these words, and call heaven and earth to witness against them.  
29 Because I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt *yourselves* and turn aside from the  
way which I have commanded you; and evil will come upon you in the latter days; because you will do  
**את** evil in the sight of יהוה, to provoke Him to anger through the things that you do.”  
30 And Moses spoke to all the congregation of Israel **את** the words of this song.

**Question:** Why did Moses say that after his death the Israelites will corrupt themselves? Although Moses predicted that the national corruption would begin as soon as he died, Scripture testifies that Israel remained righteous for as long as Joshua lived (Judges 2:7). This shows that a teacher loves his student like himself, so that Moses felt that he was still alive as long as Joshua lived (Rashi).

**Question:** How did the Israelites feel about Moses no longer being their leader? The Israelites had to face a big change when Moses, their great teacher and leader, gathered them together to tell them he would be leaving this world very soon. He wanted to share his wisdom with them one last time. Although the people felt sad and anxious that he was leaving, Moses tried to encourage them and to help them to realize that their time together had been valuable and what they had gained from the opportunity would remain with them. We can learn from this how to deal positively with life's transitions and know that even if something good comes to an end, the good that we found in it will remain with us forever.

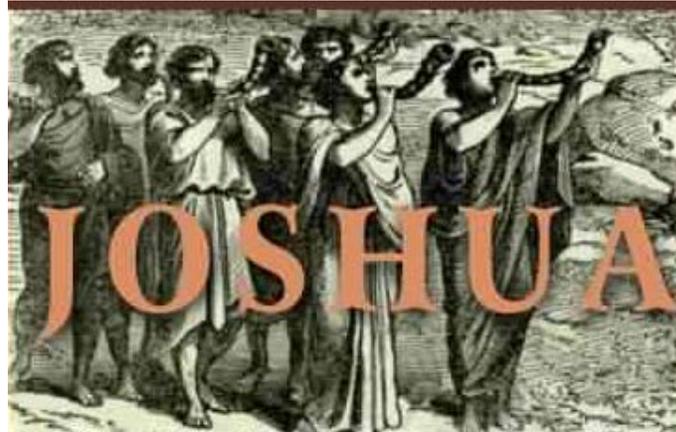
**Question:** Is it okay to feel sad when good things come to an end? It's very normal. We wish that good things could last forever. But it's also important to remember that the memories and lessons of those times will always stay with us, and that יהוה puts each person or experience in our life for just the right amount of time and for our best.

**Question:** What is so hard about facing changes, and what can we do to make transitions easier? People like a sense of security, to feel that things are the same as always. Facing changes, even if the changes themselves aren't unpleasant, shakes us out of our familiar routine and can cause us to feel less secure. One way to deal with these feelings is to develop and emphasize the parts of ourselves that will always be with us, such as our values, the spiritual side of ourselves, and our closeness to יהוה, Who never changes. When we do this, we have a steady, unchanging basis to our lives that give us the power to deal securely with whatever changes do come our way.

**Question:** Do you believe that people have within them the ability to handle any change that life may bring them? Of the many changes and transitions a person will encounter in life, many will be pleasant, others less so. The one thing that these transitions have in common is that they are all specifically sent to us by יהוה as a chance to learn and grow spiritually. יהוה will never send us a situation that is beyond our ability to handle.

This makes sense when we realize that any challenges were sent specifically to us for a specific purpose. We definitely have the tools within us to handle whatever comes our way. It's only up to us to make use of these tools.

**Spiritual Exercise:** Examine a difficult change in your life and see all the good that has come from it. How have you grown spiritually from this change?



### Story of Joshua

**Joshua 3:1** Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. **2** After three days the officers went throughout the camp, **3** giving orders to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of יהוה your Elohim, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. **4** Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it."

**5** Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow יהוה will do amazing things among you."

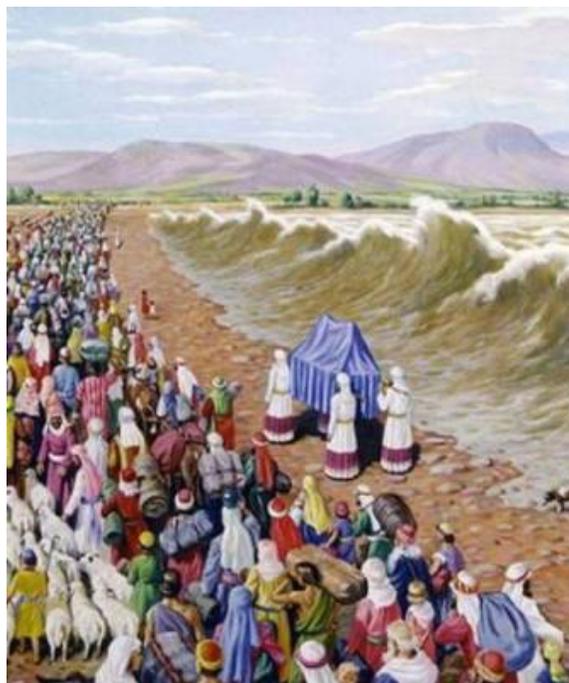
**6** Joshua said to the priests, "Take up the ark of the covenant and pass on ahead of the people." So they took it up and went ahead of them.

**7** And יהוה said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses. **8** Tell the priests who carry the ark of the covenant: 'When you reach the edge of the Jordan's waters, go and stand in the river.'"

**9** Joshua said to the Israelites, "Come here and listen to the words of יהוה your Elohim. **10** This is how you will know that the living Elohim is among you and that he will certainly drive out before you the Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites and Jebusites. **11** See, the ark of the covenant of יהוה of all the earth will go into the Jordan ahead of you. **12** Now then, choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one from each tribe. **13** And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of יהוה-יהוה of all the earth-set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap."



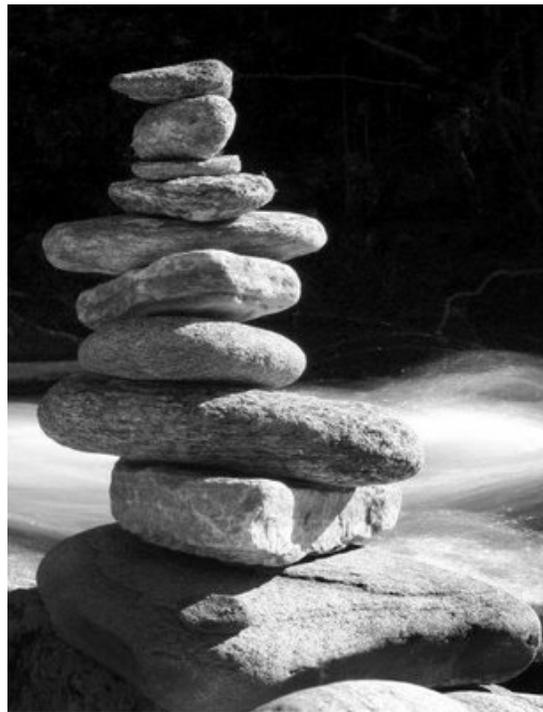
**14** So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. **15** Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, **16** the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. **17** The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of יהוה stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.



Joshua crosses the Jordan

**Joshua 4:1** When the whole nation had finished crossing the Jordan, יהוה said to Joshua, 2 "Choose twelve men from among the people, one from each tribe, 3 and tell them to take up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan from right where the priests stood and to carry them over with you and put them down at the place where you stay tonight."

4 So Joshua called together the twelve men he had appointed from the Israelites, one from each tribe, 5 and said to them, "Go over before the ark of יהוה your Elohim into the middle of the Jordan. Each of you is to take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, 6 to serve as a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean?' 7 tell them that the flow of the Jordan was cut off before the ark of the covenant of יהוה. When it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever."



12 stones

8 So the Israelites did as Joshua commanded them. They took twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites, as יהוה had told Joshua; and they carried them over with them to their camp, where they put them down. 9 Joshua set up the twelve stones that had been in the middle of the Jordan at the spot where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant had stood. And they are there to this day.

10 Now the priests who carried the ark remained standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything יהוה had commanded Joshua was done by the people, just as Moses had directed Joshua. The people hurried over, 11 and as soon as all of them had crossed, the ark of יהוה and the priests came to the other side while the people watched. 12 The men of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over, armed, in front of the Israelites, as Moses had directed them. 13 About 40,000 armed for battle crossed over before יהוה to the plains of Jericho for war.

14 That day יהוה exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they revered him all the days of his life, just as they had revered Moses.

15 Then יהוה said to Joshua, 16 "Command the priests carrying the ark of the Testimony to come up out of the Jordan."

17 So Joshua commanded the priests, "Come up out of the Jordan."

18 And the priests came up out of the river carrying the ark of the covenant of יהוה. No sooner had they set their feet on the dry ground than the waters of the Jordan returned to their place and ran at flood stage as before.



Joshua 6:1 Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in. Then יהוה said to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. 3 March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. 4 Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. 5 When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have all the people give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the people will go up, every man straight in."

6 So Joshua son of Nun called the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant of יהוה and have seven priests carry trumpets in front of it." 7 And he ordered the people, "Advance! March around the city, with the armed guard going ahead of the ark of יהוה."

8 When Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets before יהוה went forward, blowing their trumpets, and the ark of יהוה's covenant followed them. 9 The armed guard marched ahead of the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard followed the ark. All this time the trumpets were sounding. 10 But Joshua had commanded the people, "Do not give a war cry, do not raise your voices, do not say a word until the day I tell you to shout. Then shout!" 11 So he had the ark of יהוה carried around the city, circling it once. Then the people returned to camp and spent the night there.

12 Joshua got up early the next morning and the priests took up the ark of יהוה. 13 The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets went forward, marching before the ark of יהוה and blowing the trumpets. The armed men went ahead of them and the rear guard followed the ark of יהוה, while the trumpets kept sounding. 14 So on the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days.

15 On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times. 16 The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, "Shout! For יהוה has given you the city!"

17 The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to יהוה. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall be spared, because she hid the spies we sent. 18 But keep away from the devoted things, so that you will not bring about your own destruction by taking any of them. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it. 19 All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to יהוה and must go into his treasury." 20 When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city. 21 They devoted the city to יהוה and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it-men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.



22 Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her out and all who belong to her, in accordance with your oath to her." 23 So the young men who had done the spying went in and brought out Rahab, her father and mother and brothers and all who belonged to her. They brought out her entire family and put them in a place outside the camp of Israel.

24 Then they burned the whole city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of יהוה's house. 25 But Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, with her family and all who belonged to her, because she hid the men Joshua had sent as spies to Jericho-and she lives among the Israelites to this day.

26 At that time Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: "Cursed before יהוה is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho:

"At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates."

27 So יהוה was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.

## Do you know?

1. The Israelites made a \_\_\_ with יהוה to keep all his commandments.
2. The covenant the Israelites made with יהוה was for them and their \_\_\_\_\_. (who?)
3. If you break יהוה's commandments and do not repent, \_\_\_\_\_ will come upon you.
4. If you are in exile, יהוה promises to bring you back to \_\_\_\_\_ in the last days. (where?)
5. יהוה promises to \_\_\_\_\_ your heart so you can love יהוה with all your heart and soul.
6. The commandments are not too \_\_\_ for you to keep.
7. יהוה gives you a choice between blessings and \_\_\_\_\_
8. יהוה asks you to choose \_\_\_\_\_ so you may live with יהוה forever.
9. Moses was \_\_\_\_\_ years old when he died.
10. יהוה wanted the laws read to the Israelites every \_\_\_ years during the Feast of Tabernacles.
11. After Moses died, \_\_\_\_\_ led the Israelites across the Jordan River. (who?)
12. The Levis priests carrying the \_\_\_ went before the Israelites as they crossed the Jordan River.
13. One man from each tribe placed a \_\_\_\_\_ in the middle of the Jordan River as a memorial of what יהוה had done for them.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ men were armed for battle when they crossed the Jordan River. (how many?)

### Answers:

1. covenant
2. descendants
3. curses
4. Israel
5. circumcise
6. hard
7. curses
8. life
9. 120
10. 7
11. Joshua
12. Ark of the Covenant
13. stone
14. 40,000

## Haftorah

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in יהוה, my soul will be joyful in my Elohim; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments and as a bride adorns herself with her Israelites.

11 For as the earth brings forth her bud and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so Adonay יהוה will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.

Isaiah 62:1 For Zion's (a mountain in Jerusalem) sake I will not hold My peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness and her salvation as a lamp that burns.

2 And the gentiles (nations) will see your righteousness and all kings your glory: and you will be called by a new name, which the mouth of יהוה will name.

3 You will also be a crown of glory in the hand of יהוה and a royal diadem (head-dress) in the hand of your Elohim.

4 You will no more be considered Forsaken (deserted); neither will your land any more be termed Desolate (waste): but you will be called Hephzi-bah (My delight is in you) and your land Beulah (married): for יהוה delights in you and your land will be married.

5 For as a young man marries a virgin, so will your sons marry you: and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so will your Elohim rejoice over you.

6 I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, which will never hold their peace day nor night: you that make mention of יהוה אֵת, do not keep silent,

7 And give Him no rest, till He establishes and until He makes יהוה אֵת Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

8 יהוה has sworn by His right hand and by His arm of his strength stretched out, certainly I will no more give יהוה אֵת your grain to be food for your enemies; and the sons of the stranger will not drink your new wine, for which you have labored:

9 But they that have gathered it will eat it and praise יהוה אֵת; and they that have brought it together will drink it together in the courts of My sacred courts.

Hosea 14:1 O Israel, return to יהוה your Elohim; for you have fallen by your iniquity.

2 Take with you words and turn to יהוה: say to him, take away all iniquity and receive us graciously: so will we render the sacrifices of our lips.

3 Asshur will not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, you are our Elohim: for in you the fatherless finds mercy.

4 I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for My anger is turned away from him.

5 I will be as the dew to Israel: He will grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

6 His branches will spread and his beauty will be as the olive tree and his smell as Lebanon.

7 They that live under his shadow will return; they will revive as the grain and grow as the vine: the scent of it will be as the wine of Lebanon.

8 Ephraim will say, what have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. Your fruit is found in Me.

9 Who is wise and he will understand these things? Prudent and he will know them? For the ways of יהוה are righteous and the just will walk in them: but the transgressors will fall there.

Joel 2:15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast and call a solemn assembly:

16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth from his chamber and the bride out of her closet.

17 Let the priests, the ministers of יהוה, weep between the porch and the altar and let them say, spare your people, O יהוה and give not your heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, where is their Elohim?

18 Then will יהוה be jealous for His land and pity His people.

19 Certainly, יהוה will answer and say to His people, see, I will send you אֶת grain and wine and oil and you will be satisfied by them: and I will no longer make you a reproach among the heathen:

20 But I will remove far off from you the northern army and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, אֶת with his face toward the east sea and his back toward the utmost sea and his stench will rise up and his foul odor will rise up, because he has done monstrous things.

21 Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for יהוה will do great things.

22 Be not afraid, you beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree bears her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

23 Be glad then, you children of Zion and rejoice in יהוה your Elohim: for He has given you אֶת the former rain moderately and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain in the first month.

24 And the floors will be full of wheat and the fats will overflow with wine and oil.

25 And I will restore to you אֶת the years that the locust has eaten, the cankerworm and the caterpillar and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you.

26 And you will eat in plenty and be satisfied and praise אֶת the name of יהוה your Elohim that has dealt wondrously with you: and My people will never be ashamed.

27 And you will know that I am in the midst of Israel and that I am יהוה your Elohim and none else: and My people will never be ashamed.

Micah 7:18 Who is like Elohim to you, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retains not His anger for ever, because He delights in mercy.

19 He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

20 You will perform the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham, which you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old.

## Brit Chadasha

Rom 7:7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "Do not covet." 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death. 12 So then, the law is sacred, and the commandment is sacred, righteous and good.

Rom 1:1 Paul, a servant of Yahshua, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of יהוה - 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Sacred Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of righteousness was declared with power to be the Son of יהוה by his resurrection from the dead: Yahshua.

5 Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. 6 And you also are among those who are called to belong to Yahshua. 7 To all in Rome who are loved by יהוה and called to be saints: Grace and peace to you from יהוה our Father and from Yahshua our Messiah. 8 First, I thank my יהוה through Yahshua for all of you, because your faith is being reported all over the world. 9 יהוה, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you 10 in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by יהוה's will the way may be opened for me to come to you. 11 I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong- 12 that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. 13 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles. 14 I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. 15 That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome. 16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of יהוה for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Israelite, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from יהוה is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." 18 The wrath of יהוה is being revealed from heaven against all the unrighteousness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

Rom 9:30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; 31 but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. 32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." 33 As it is written: "See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to יהוה for the Israelites is that they may be saved. 2 For I can testify about them that they are zealous for יהוה, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. 3 Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from יהוה and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to יהוה's righteousness. 4 Yahshua is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. 5 Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by the law: "The man who does these things will live by them." 6 But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Yahshua down) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'" (that is, to bring Yahshua up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Yahshua is יהוה," and believe in your heart that יהוה raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Israelite and Gentile-the same יהוה is יהוה of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of יהוה will be saved."

### Real Life

Real life has a lot to offer -- from the beauty of nature (even in our own back yard) to the warm feelings of being part of a family and a community. The simple pleasures of our daily encounters with the people around us can make our lives feel happy and rich.

Yet nowadays with so many types of entertainment to choose from, and all the exciting new gadgets that seem to be springing up everyday, we can get lost in fantasy and almost forget about our real lives.

The Torah portion this week reminds us to "choose life" -- to choose to fully live and appreciate the specialness of the real lives that Elohim had given us; to realize that there is a lot to enjoy for each of us everyday.

## **"SMOKE SCREEN"**

"DO NOT DISTURB -- DEFENDER AT WORK!" read the sign in bold black letters hanging on the door to John's room.

John would lock himself alone in there for hours at a time and submerge himself in what he liked to call his "control center."

His "control center" included a surround-sound audio system and a state of the art large screen computer/video hook-up complete with the latest interactive game software. His grandparents had given it to him for his birthday and lately it seemed to be all he was interested in.

One afternoon his older brother Sam knocked on the door. There was no answer. He knocked again, harder, causing the "Do Not Disturb" sign to swing back and forth on its hook.

"Go away earthling," barked out an annoyed sounding voice from with the room.

"Hey, come on out, John," Sam shouted. "I need to talk to you."

Finally the door opened a crack and Sam could make out his younger brother's silhouette from behind it. He was wearing his new silver and day-glow wireless virtual space helmet.

"John, I could use your help. I'm putting up screens on the windows. It's getting to be bee season and they're coming in. One even stung Rachel," he added, referring to their kid sister who could be heard crying in the background.

"Forget it!" answered the younger boy. "First of all I told you my name's not John anymore, its 8-N. And secondly I'm busy with something much more important right now -- saving the world!"

"What do you mean?" asked Sam, incredulous.

"I mean," said John, "That the Zilgons have practically entered our atmosphere. If I don't monitor the situation there will be a total invasion."

Sam rolled his eyes. "That's just a video game," he said. "It isn't really happening. Come on out and help me, or at least help Avi rake the leaves, you know how mom's allergic. Besides," he added, "It's beautiful outside. The fresh air will do you good."

"Rake the leaves!" gasped John. "How can you worry about such trivia while the future of the galaxy is at stake?!"

"Listen, brother," said Sam in an understanding tone. "I know you're really into your video games. I like to play too sometimes. But there's more to life. You live in a real family, with real people who care about you and expect you to be part of us. If you care about invasions, come help me with the real-life bee invasion that's going to happen soon if we don't get these screens up."

John was quiet. He opened the door, took off his space helmet, looking a little embarrassed. "I guess I am getting a bit carried away," he said. "It's just that the games are so ... exciting. Real life is boring," he sighed.

"Only if you let it be," countered Sam. "Believe me it was pretty exciting when that bee was chasing me a few minutes ago. And when I finally managed to trap it and looked at it up close, it really looked like something from out of this world. Elohim created an amazing world -- right here, right now. And you don't need any special helmets to enjoy it. So what do you say, 8-N?"

The younger boy chuckled. "You can call me John," he said. "My real name is exciting enough too, I suppose. Hand me a force-field ... er, a screen, and let's get going!"

**Question:** How did John feel when his brother first asked him to stop playing the video game and help out in the house? He was upset because he felt that what he was doing was more important.

**Question:** Was John really helping more people by pretending to "save the world" on his video game or helping his family in the house? By helping his family.

**Question:** Why? Because even though his game was fun and exciting for him, it wasn't real. But helping out his family was something real he could do to actually help people.

**Question:** Would it really make any difference in the lives of John and his family if the "Zilgons" in his video game invaded the Earth or not? No.

**Question:** So why do you suppose John was so caught up as to sit for hours in front of the screen in order to "defend the world?" Things like video games, TV, etc., are designed to get a person excited. They simulate situations that, if they really happened in our lives, would be terrifying. (Imagine if aliens really had invaded!) But since in the end, these games aren't really a part of our real lives, a person ends up getting all excited about nothing. These games can be fun for a while. But sooner or later, we all want more. We find that we want to put our energy into things with real meaning, and that when we do, it's much more interesting than any video game. This is called "choosing life."