

NITZAVIM (you are standing)



Deuteronomy 29:10 אתם *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, “אתם *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]. *Chumash*

Deuteronomy 29:11 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. C-MATS

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). *Chumash*



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). *Chumash*

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.



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

Deuteronomy 29:12 That you may enter into covenant *with יהוה* your Elohim and into His oath, which יהוה your Elohim makes with you this day. C-MATS

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]: *Chumash*

Deuteronomy 29:13 That He may establish **אתה** 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 **הוא** this **את** covenant **ואת** and **הוא** this oath; **15** But *with* **את** him that stands here with us this day before יהוה our Elohim **ואת** and also with him that is not here with us this day. C-MATS

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. *Chumash*

Deuteronomy 29:16 For **אתם** you know **את** how we have lived in the land of Egypt; **ואת** and how we passed through the nations; **17** And you have seen **את** their abominations **ואת** 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 **את** *the* gods of these nations; let there not be among you a root that bears bitterness and wormwood.
C-MATS



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

Deuteronomy 29:19 *If a man hears אה words of ה זאת 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, to add drunkenness (watered) אה to thirst (as if the drunkard could be included with the sober). C-MATS*



Do not secretly say in your heart.

Question: How is a person in danger who says, “I will have peace even though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness (watered) אה to thirst”? 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. *Chumash*

Question: What does “(watered) **את** to thirst” 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. "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). *Chumash*

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.



The anger of **יהוה** will burn against you.

Deuteronomy 29:20 **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 will blot out **יהוה את** his name from under heavens. C-MATS

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). *Chumash*

Deuteronomy 29:21 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. C-MATS



Sodom and Gomorrah

Deuteronomy 29:22 So that the coming generation of your children and the stranger that will come from a far land will say when they see **את** the plagues of that land **ואת** and the sicknesses which **יהוה** has laid upon it; 23 And the whole land *becomes* burning brimstone and salt, so *that* it is not planted or bears *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. C-MATS



Sodom and Gomorrah today

Deuteronomy 29:24 All the nations will say why has **יהוה** done this to **הזאת** *this* land? What is the meaning of such furious great anger? 25 Then men will say, because they have forsaken *the* **את** covenant of **יהוה** Elohim **אבתם** *of their fathers*, which He made with them when He brought **אתם** *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. C-MATS

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) **And the land has become defiled: therefore, I will bring punishment upon it and will vomit out of the land אֶת her inhabitants. Leviticus 18:25 Chumash**

Deuteronomy 29:27 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 ליהוה to 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 הַאֵת this Torah. C-MATS

Question: What does “The secret things belong ליהוה to 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) **Yes, of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her; and the Most High Himself will establish her. 6 יהוה will count, when He writes up the people, this one was born there. Psalms 87:5-6**

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 is the prophecy for us in Deuteronomy 30? Chapter 30 begins with a prophecy יהוה spoke through Moses concerning the scattering of the 12 tribes (*two houses*) to the nations for their sin and rebellion and how their descendants will remember and begin to obey Torah. **Deuteronomy 30:3 Then will reverse יהוה your Elohim 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...6 And will circumcise יהוה your Elohim אֶת your heart וְאֶת 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... 8 And you will return and obey the voice of יהוה and do אֶת all His commandments, which I command you this day... 15 See, I have set before you this day אֶת life וְאֶת goodness וְאֶת death וְאֶת adversity...16 In this I command you this day to love אֶת יהוה 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.** This prophecy probably started being fulfilled in 1948 as the House of Judah returned to Israel and became a nation and these verses imply the working of both יהוה and אֶת to accomplish the future events together as ONE to bring the House of Israel (*10 northern tribes*) back to the covenant land, after Ezekiel chapter 38-39 and Zechariah chapter 14 are fulfilled. C-MATS

BLESSING OR CURSE YOU CAN CHOOSE

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. C-MATS

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. *Chumash*



Jews return to Israel in record numbers

Deuteronomy 30:2 And return to יהוה your Elohim and obey His voice according to all that I command you this day, **אתה** you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul; 3 Then will reverse יהוה your Elohim **את** your captivity and have compassion upon you and will return and gather you from all the nations, where יהוה your Elohim has scattered you. C-MATS

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 "**וְאַתֶּם** and you will be gathered one by one, O you Children of Israel." (Isaiah 27:12). *Chumash*



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

Deuteronomy 30:4 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. C-MATS

foreskin of heart



Circumcise your heart

Deuteronomy 30:6 And will circumcise יהוה your Elohim **את** your heart **ואת** and the heart of your descendants to love יהוה **את** your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live (*refreshed*). C-MATS

Question: What does it mean to “circumcise יהוה your Elohim **את** 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 sin. Chumash

Deuteronomy 30:7 And will put יהוה your Elohim **את** all **קללות** the curses upon your enemies and on them that hate you, who persecuted you. 8 **ואתה** And you will return and obey the voice of יהוה and do **את** 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 prosper: because יהוה will again rejoice to see you do well, as He rejoiced over your fathers. C-MATS

THE VOICE

Listen to the voice of יהוה

Deuteronomy 30:10 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 **האזנה** *this* commandment which I command you this day *is* not too hard for you or beyond your reach. C-MATS

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 or even a text to tell him that you're praying for him.
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..."
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!

Deuteronomy 30:12 *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 אֶת־ה' it (him) and do it? C-MATS*

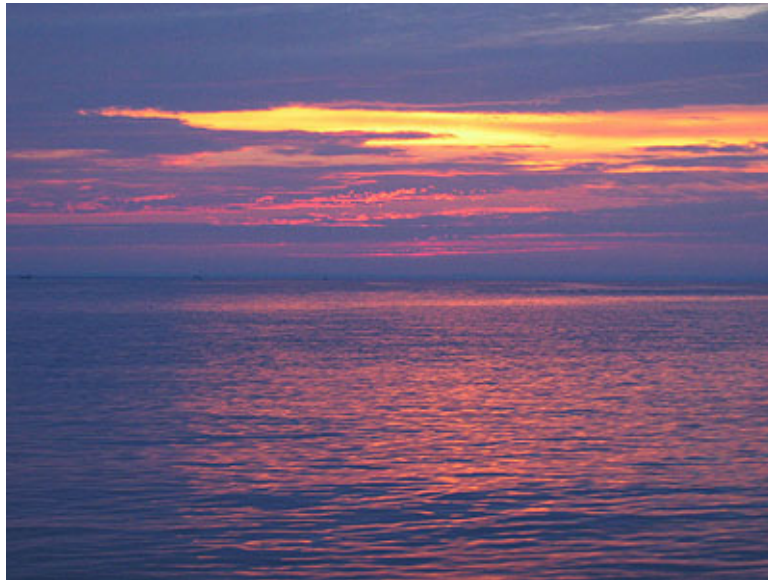
Question: What does it mean "who will go up for us to the heavens"? You do not need a prophet to bring you heavenly messages before you can come close to יהוה. Yahusha came down to you to bring you the Truth, because you could not come up to Heaven to receive the message.



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

Deuteronomy 30:13 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 **אָהֵא** *it (him)* and do it? C-MATS

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. *Chumash*



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.

Deuteronomy 30:14 But the word *is* very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it. C-MATS



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 Believer 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). *Chumash*

Deuteronomy 30:15 See, I have set before you this day **חַיִּים** life **וְמוֹת** and goodness **וְחַיִּים** and death **וְמוֹת** and adversity (*evil*). C-MATS



Deuteronomy 30:16 In this I command you this day to love יהוה את 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 אתה 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 אתה you pass over את the Jordan to go in to possess it. C-MATS



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 in Deuteronomy 30:15 "See, I have set before you this day חַיִּים את life וְמוֹת and goodness וְטוֹב and death וְרָע and adversity (*evil*).

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.



Heaven and earth are witnesses of יהוה's warning.

Deuteronomy 30:19 I call as a witness this day **את** the heavens **ואת** and the earth against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life that both **אתה** you and your descendants may live. C-MATS

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 Believers, who are rewarded for performing the commandments, be zealous in fulfilling יהוה's will? (Rashi). *Chumash*



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. 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 nurse, an athlete, or movie actor?

Question: In your opinion, who do you think is doing a more important job: a nurse who spends long days helping people get well so they can live happier and fuller lives, or a big movie star or athlete who spends his free time on the beach? The nurse.

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

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.

Question: Should you long to make more money? Should you be content with what you have?

Hebrews 13:5 Let your life be without covetousness; and be content with the things you have: for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. **6** So that we may boldly say, Adonai is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do to me. **7** Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of Elohim: whose faith you follow, consider the outcome of their life. **8** Y'shua haMashiach is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. C-MATS

Ecclesiastes 5:10 He that loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loves abundance, with increase. C-MATS

Matthew 6:24 **No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve Elohim and money.** C-MATS

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is *the* root of all evil: which some have coveted after, and then wandered from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. **17** Command those who are rich in this present age, that they not be haughty, nor trust in uncertain riches, but trust in the living Elohim, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; **18** Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share; **19** Laying up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may take hold of eternal life. C-MATS

1 Samuel 2:7 יהוה Makes poor and makes rich: He brings low, he also lifts up. C-MATS



Deuteronomy 30:20 That you may love יהוה את- 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. C-MATS

Question: What is the purpose of your life?

1. Love יהוה
2. Obey His Voice
3. Cling to Him (so you can be transformed into His Image and prepare you for the life to come)

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 from love.**" **Song of Solomon 2:5** Indeed, the entire Song of Solomon is a metaphor for the concept of his lovesickness for יהוה. *Chumash*



Question: What promises do we the exiles have?

1. You will listen to His voice.
2. You will return to יהוה with all your heart and with all your soul.
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 will 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.

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. The purpose of your life is to love יהוה, obey His _____, and cling to Him.
8. יהוה asks you to choose _____ so you may live with יהוה forever.
9. **Keep your lives free from the love of _____.**
10. After you return to the Land, יהוה will put all the curses on your _____ instead of you.

Answers:

1. Covenant
2. Children
3. Curses
4. The Land
5. Circumcise
6. Hard
7. Voice
8. Life
9. Money
10. Enemies

Haftorah

Isaiah 61:10 I will greatly rejoice in ביהוה, My soul shall 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 cloths himself with a garland and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. 11 For as the earth brings forth its bud and as the garden causes the things that are planted in it to spring forth; so Adonai יהוה will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. Isaiah 62:1 For Zion's sake will I not hold My peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brightness and her salvation (*Yeshuwah*) as a lamp that burns. 2 And the nations shall see your righteousness and all kings your glory and you shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of יהוה shall name. 3 You shall also be a crown of תְּפִאֲרֹת *beauty* in the hand of יהוה and a royal diadem in the hand of your Elohim. 4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall your land anymore be termed Desolate: but you shall be called Hephzi-bah (*my delight*) and your land Beulah (*husband*); for יהוה delights in you and your land shall be married. 5 For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your Elohim rejoice over you. 6 I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day nor night, you that make mention of יהוה אלהי keep not silent, 7 And give Him no rest, until He establishes and until He makes אלהי Jerusalem a praise in the earth. 8 יהוה has sworn by His right hand and by the arm of His strength, surely, no more אלהי *I will give אלהי* your grain to be food for your enemies; and foreigners shall not drink your new wine, for which you have labored: 9 But they that have gathered it, shall eat it and praise יהוה אלהי; and they that have gathered it, shall drink it in the courts of My sanctuary. 10 Go through, go through the gates; prepare you the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up an ensign for the people. 11 Behold, יהוה has proclaimed to the end of the earth, Say you to the daughter of Zion, Surely, your salvation comes; behold, His reward is אלהי *with Him* and His recompense before Him. 12 And they shall call them the holy people, the redeemed of יהוה: and you shall be called Sought out, a city not forsaken. Isaiah 63:1 Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? It is I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. 2 Why are you red in your apparel and your garments like him that treads in the wine vat? 3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the peoples there was no man אלהי *with Me*: yea, I trod them in My anger and trampled them in My wrath and their lifeblood is sprinkled upon My garments and I have stained all My raiment. 4 For the day of vengeance was in My heart and the year of My redeemed is come. 5 And I looked and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore, my own arm brought salvation to Me; and My wrath, it upheld Me. 6 And I trod down the people in My anger and made them drunk in My wrath and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth. 7 I will make mention of the loving-kindnesses of יהוה and the praises of יהוה, according to all that יהוה has bestowed on us and the great goodness toward *the* House of Israel, which He has bestowed on them according to His mercies and according to the multitude of His loving-kindnesses. 8 For He said, Surely, they are My people, children that will not deal falsely: so He was their Savior. 9 In all their affliction He was afflicted and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bares them and carried them all the days of old. C-MATS

Brit Chadasha

Romans 9:30 What shall we say then? That the Goyim, which did not follow after righteousness have attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith. **31** But Israel, which followed after the Torah of righteousness, has not attained the Torah of righteousness. **32** Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but by the works of the Torah. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone; **33** As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offence: and whoever believes on Him shall not be ashamed. **Romans 10:1** Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to Elohim for Israel is that they might be saved. **2** For I bear them record that they have a zeal for Elohim, but not according to knowledge. **3** For they are ignorant of Elohim's righteousness, and they try to establish their own righteousness, but have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of Elohim. **4** For Mashiach is the end of the Torah for righteousness to everyone that believes. **5** For Moses describes the righteousness which is by the Torah, That the man which does those things shall live by them. **6** But the righteousness which is from faith says, Do not say in your heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Mashiach down from above: **7** Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Mashiach again from the dead.) **8** But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; **9** That if you confess with your mouth Adonai Y'shua, and believe in your heart that Elohim raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For with the heart man believes to righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made resulting in salvation. **11** For the scripture says, Whoever believes on Him will not be ashamed. **12** For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Adonai is over all and gives richly to all that call upon Him. **13** For whoever will call upon the name of יהוה will be saved. C-MATS

Heb 12:14 Follow peace with all men, without holiness no man shall see Adonai: **15** Looking diligently lest any man misses the grace of Elohim; lest any root of bitterness grows up to trouble you and defile many. C-MATS

Real Life

Question: What does it mean to "choose 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 with so many types of entertainment to choose from, 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 within 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, it's 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, movies, etc., are designed to entertain you. People can get lost in their entertainment and lose sight of the joy of living. Living in the real world and helping others has more purpose than entertaining ourselves.

Spiritual Exercise: How much time are you spending on entertainment? Use some of the time you spend on entertainment to show others you love them. Call someone who is lonely or has lost a loved one. Visit a friend who is going through a difficult time and pray with him. Spend time with your family and talk to each other or pray as a family. How does יהוה want to use you this week?

Resources:

The Stone Edition of The Chumash

The Complete Messianic Aleph Tav Scriptures **C-MATS** www.AlephTavScriptures.com

"Weekly Torah Portion" from www.aish.com (stories)