

Nitzavim

This Sidrah is read on the last Shabbos of the year.¹ Moshe Rabbeinu assembled every man, woman, and child to bring them to the covenant with Hashem. A warning was issued to anyone contemplating rejecting Hashem, they could be held accountable for their misdeeds.

It is of value to note that the words *Nitzavim Hayom*, "You are standing this day," are tied in with Rosh Hashana, the Day of Judgement. The *Zohar*² states, the word *hayom*, this day, refers to Rosh Hashana when the Almighty arises to judge all mortals. In the *Yom Hadin*, the Day of Judgement, these words assume an additional dimension of significance.

We read further in the chapter "And it shall come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, and he bless himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart—that the watered be swept away with the dry', the L-rd will not pardon him."³

The question comes immediately to mind: How is it possible for one to think that he will be able to follow the dictates of his heart and will not be liable for punishment? The question is reinforced for it follows the words of the chastisement and the reality for punishment.

The *Ksav Sofer* gives us an insight into the meaning of these words. He states that the passage refers to people who are kind and generous to their fellow man but are negligent in their duties towards G-d. When these people are taken to task to explain the inconsistency in their conduct, they will answer that as long as they are good and kind to their fellow man, they have fulfilled their obligations. They have a "good heart" with mercy and compassion for the unfortunate and the needy. This is the essence of their Judaism. It is to this group that Moshe Rabbeinu, our leader, directs his remarks. If after they hear the

words of chastisement, they will say, "I will have peace," even though they follow the dictates of their hearts. The emphasis is on the word *Bilvavo*, with his heart. He serves Hashem by possessing a kind heart. This is the totality of his Judaism. It is to this person that the passage issues a warning, "The L-rd will not be willing to pardon him." The attitude of this errant individual is in contradiction to the *Shlaymus*, the totality of Torah Judaism.

If we are to move in and identify the area of weakness within our Jewish ranks, we will note the relevance of this passage. A large segment of our American Jewish brethren identify themselves with their Judaism in the confines of *bilvavo*, a Jew at heart. They are charitable, kind, and giving of themselves. However, in the area of *Kiyum Hamitzvos*, the performance of the commandments, many are deficient and faulty. In their way of thinking, one can be a good Jew without Shabbos, Kashruth and Taharas Hamishpacha. This approach is in error and it is not in keeping with Torah Judaism.

As we approach the day of Judgement may we be filled with a total acknowledgement of the words recited in our prayers daily: "O our Father, Merciful Father, ever compassionate, have mercy upon us, O put it into our hearts to understand and to discern, to mark, learn and teach, to heed, to do and to fulfill in love all the words of instruction in Thy Torah."

FOOTNOTES

1. Tosphos, Megilla 31b
2. III:231a
3. Devorim 29:18-19