

PARASHAT NITZAVIM-VAYELECH

Shabbat Shalom!

This week's double portion, Nitzavim-Vayelevch brings us to the point where the Israelites were standing before God making a commitment to enter into the covenant and where Moses informs the people that his tenure as their leader is coming to an end. He goes on to remind the people of the consequences of their actions, should they turn away from God to worship other gods. Finally, the people are assured that if they return to God, worshipping him according to the covenant, they will be forgiven.

It is hard to imagine the emotions that were felt across the Israelite community at this moment of major change. On the crux of a transformation, the Israelites likely felt hopeful and excited about the new possibilities but also fearful and full of self-doubt that they would disappoint God or not know how to follow His covenant.

This summer of 2010 has probably been full of the most transitions that I have ever experienced in my life. I have committed to a new position, working more closely with the Religious School and with young families. I have committed to a marriage and to care for a new home. All of these changes are surely blessings in my life (just as the covenant was for the Israelites), but they can also feel daunting at times, for fear of not doing them well.

In this parasha we find God reassuring the people that the covenant and the Torah is within their grasp. They must not be afraid. We learn that "this Instruction which I enjoin upon you this day is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond your reach. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, "Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?" He further explains that we do not need to cross the sea to reach it either. Torah is all around and each of us can find it in a different venue.

Like in the new film, "Eat Pray Love," you needn't travel all over the world or to heaven or across the sea to find the Torah (spirituality). You can find Torah in praying on Shabbat morning in either of our two great minyanim or with your children at a Tot Shabbat or Youth and Family Service. You can find Torah in celebrating the holidays in your home or lighting Shabbat candles with your family. You can find Torah by engaging in Tikkun Olam to make the world a better place or by participating in community events. The Torah is not in heaven, it is right in your hands, your heart and your community. Take the time to seek it out. You may just be surprised where you find it.

As we approach this time period of transition, into the new year of 5771, and a new school year, I encourage you to create a plan for seeking Torah in a way that is right for you and your family. For each of us there is a door that will lead us to greater spirituality and a sense of community. Our door is open to you! Aubrey joins me in wishing you a Shabbat Shalom from our home to yours!

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We welcome your comments and reflections!

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Palestinian Terrorists Kill Four Israelis

Four Israeli civilians, including a pregnant woman, were shot and killed outside of Hebron on Tuesday by Palestinian terrorists. According to eyewitnesses, the terrorists hit the passengers in their initial fire, then approached the car and shot the occupants at close range. The Washington Post reported that the shooting occurred when the victims' car stopped at an intersection in the southern West Bank and that the attack was likely carried out by multiple gunmen. The tragic incident came as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas were set to resume direct talks for the first time in 18 months.

Our synagogue works with AIPAC, America's pro-Israel lobby, in educating our community on issues affecting the U.S.-Israel relationship. We encourage you to learn more by contacting AIPAC at (202) 639-5200 or by visiting www.aipac.org.