

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

SIMCHAT TORAH

How We Succeed

The Haftora¹ for parshas V'zos Habracha, which is read on Shemini Atzeres in Israel and Simchas Torah (which is the second day of Shemini Atzeres) in the Diaspora, is the beginning of the book of Yehoshua, which is the continuation of the events in our parsha. As it begins, "And it was after Moshe died..."²

When you delve deeper into the Haftora, you begin to see how it connects with Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah, keeping and studying Torah, and doing good deeds, loyalty and brotherhood.

The Haftora records the first communication from Hashem to Yehoshua and the preparation before crossing the Jordan into the promised land.

SIMCHAS TORAH IS NOT JUST A CELEBRATION OF TORAH; IT'S A CELEBRATION OF UNITY BETWEEN JEWS AND UNITY WITH OUR CREATOR.

Hashem tells Yehoshua that they would be crossing the Jordan and that "everywhere that the soles of (the Jewish people's) feet will tread, I will give to you (the Jewish people)."³ He

continues to tell Yehoshua the borders of Israel, that no man will ever stand up against him and that He will be with him just as He was with Moshe.

Now comes a statement that is repeated over and over again to Yehoshua, "Chazak v'ematz,"⁴ be strong and have courage. He is told this by Hashem

three times. First with regards to leading the Jewish people, then about keeping the Torah, and finally about going to war.

About keeping the Torah, Hashem says, "Just be strong and very courageous to observe and do in accordance with all of the Torah that Moshe My servant has commanded you. Do not stray therefrom right or left, in order that you succeed wherever you go. This book of the Torah shall not leave your mouth; you shall meditate therein day and night, in order that you observe to do all that is written in it, for then will you succeed in all your ways and then will you prosper."⁵

This message said to Yehoshua, is a lesson to each of us, and connects to Simchas Torah, when we conclude the last parsha of the Torah and start reading once again from the beginning.

The Midrash⁶ tells us, that from the words, "This book of the Torah shall not leave your mouth," we learn that Yehoshua had a Sefer Torah with him. Rashi tells us that it was the book of Devarim. When he completed the last words, Hashem said, "Chazak v'ematz." From here we have the rule, that when someone completes the Torah, we say Chazak.

The Talmud⁷ tells us, "four need strengthening, (meaning, that a person has to constantly strengthen himself with all his might to do them, Rashi) and these are they, Torah, good deeds... As it says, 'Just be strong and very courageous to observe and do in accordance with all of the Torah,' be strong in Torah and courageous in doing good

1 Chabad and Ashkenazic communities read Joshua 1:1-18, Sephardic communities read Joshua 1:1-9.

2 Joshua 1:1.

3 Joshua 1:3.

4 Joshua 1:6,7,9,18.

5 Joshua 1:7-8.

6 Sefer Hamanhig, Seder Tefilas Shabbos siman 57, in the name of Bereishis Raba (however it is not found in the modern print of Bereishis Raba, perhaps he had a different girsa of Bereishis Raba chapter 6).

7 Brachos 32b.



deeds...”⁸

⁹“Do not stray therefrom right or left, in order that you succeed wherever you go.” Being that Torah is truth and G-dly knowledge, the closer you align yourself to it and the more accurately you follow it, the more you will succeed and find happiness and meaning.

It is not enough to learn and understand it. But, “you shall meditate¹⁰ therein day and night.” In other words, you have to take it to a whole new level, each according to his ability, to make it part of who you are, to have a deeper understanding of what Hashem wants, and to know the inner workings of the Torah.¹¹ “In order that you observe to do all that is written in it,” because you will find pleasure in doing it, now that you see the purpose in it.

Hashem continues, “for then will you succeed in all your ways and then will you prosper.” A Torah life, is a successful and prosperous life. It is a life of truth and values, it is real and fulfilling. Therefore you will find satisfaction and you won’t feel empty.

Now, Yehoshua sends word to prepare to cross the Jordan and he calls on the tribes of Reuvain, Gad and Menashe to keep their promise to join their brothers in battle, although they were already settled on the other side of the Jordan. They wholeheartedly consented and told Yehoshua that they would do whatever he requests of them.

Keeping their promise was an act of brotherhood and unity. And that is the idea of Shemini Atzeres, while on the seven days of Sukkos there were 70 bulls brought as sacrifices for the nations of the world, on Shemini Atzeres only one bull was brought for the Jewish people. It is a time of unity among the Jewish people and between Hashem and the

8 See Lekutei Sichos volume 25 p. 474.

9 The ideas found from this point on came to me as I was preparing this article. I don’t know if these ideas are brought down anywhere, perhaps one of the readers can enlighten me.

10 For a discussion on the obligation of “And you shall meditate therein day and night,” see Lekutei Sichos volume 29 p. 263.

11 I was blessed to grow up in Chabad, where learning Chabad Chassidic teaching is part of the school curriculum. Inner workings of the Torah, our purpose, and how to be a Jew that Hashem wants is discussed, making Judaism so meaningful and pleasurable.

Jewish people. This idea is seen in Simchas Torah as well, as we all dance with the Torah, irrespective of level of scholarship, we dance together as equals, because the Torah is our inheritance, it is equally ours.

Being the last day of our holiday season, it is meant to set the tone for the whole year. That is why we have these themes stressed at this time, because these ideas of keeping and studying Torah, delving deeply into it, doing good deeds, unity, brotherhood, and loyalty to our Tzadikim, is what fortifies us and enables us to do our mission.

Just as in the Haftora, they prepare to cross the Jordan into the promised land, we will soon complete our mission, go together to our Holy Land, with the coming of Moshiach. May he come soon.

“Dear Rabbi Yitzi

I recently saw one of your posts and decided to check out your page.

I was so inspired by the quotes; i practically read through all of them!

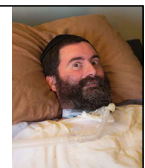
Besides for that, I was also inspired by your strength and connection to Hashem.

I am a Cohain, raised conservative, have since become more reformed over the years but have always known how special it is to be Jewish and this has deepened exponentially over the past 371 days. I feel the connection between our whole Jewish family and I am grateful to have found such a light in Rabbi you!”

- Julie K, Florida

RABBI YITZI WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND YOUR MESSAGE TO:
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Despite facing one of life’s most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe’s Shluchim to Temecula, California.



IN HONOR OF THE BIRTHDAY OF
EFRAIM ZEV GEISINSKY

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