

NITZAVIM

They're Playing OUR Song!

2004 · Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

NITZAVIM/VAYEILECH/ROSH HASHANAH (Deuteronomy 29:9-31:30) "They're Playing OUR Song!"

Wouldn't it be nice if we could figure out a way to WANT to do what's right? There is no shortage of people who BELIEVE in the divinity of the Torah. They accept the fact that the Torah is a special gift that G-d gave us via Moses. They know that they should observe the Kosher Laws and Sabbath Laws. They understand that we have a unique and holy mission to be a Light unto the Nations. The problem is that "the spirit is willing, but the body is weak." We know that we shouldn't go on that five-thousand-calorie binge and that we'll be sorry when we get on the scale in the morning. Yet, we do it anyway. Many of us treat religion the same way. If only we could get ourselves into "Do-What-is-Right mode." Hang in there. Help is on the way. ----- *"It is not with you alone that I am estab**lishing this Covenant... Rather, it is with both those who are here standing with us before G-d and those who are not here with us today."* (Deuteronomy, 29, 13-14) Rashi explains that Moses was declaring that all future generations were included in this Covenant with G-d. It's not just our ancestors who accepted the Torah. We, too, have accepted the Torah! How is that so? How could you and I have accepted the Torah in the Sinai desert if we weren't born until thirty-five hundred years later?! Our Sages tell us that every *Neshamah*, every Jewish soul, stood there at Mount Sinai and accepted the Torah. Therefore, we are bound by the Covenant that was established there. We, too, saw the miracles at Mount Sinai. We, too, heard G-d thunder forth with the Ten Commandments. At least, our SOULS heard it. Well, what good does that do US?! If we don't remember being at Mount Sinai, how can we expect to be inspired by the events that occurred there? How can we expect to overcome the difficulties of being an observant Jew? Difficulties? What difficulties? *"This Mitzvah ... is not hidden or far from you. It is not in Heaven, that it should require you to say, 'Who will go up to Heaven for us and bring it to us so we can hear it and fulfill it?' Nor is it across the sea, that it should require you to say, 'Who will cross the sea for us and bring it to us so we can hear it and fulfill it?' Rather, it is very near to you, in your mouth and your heart, to fulfill it!"* (Ib**id 30, 11-13) ----- The second of this week's two Torah Portions tells us that there is a Mitzvah incumbent upon every Jew to write a Torah scroll: *"And now, write for yourselves this song, and teach it to the Children of Israel; place it in their mouths, so that this song will be a witness for the Children of Israel."* (Ibid 31:19) The Torah is a very special and sacred song. It is a harmonious symphony of holiness and inspiration. Do you remember the first time you heard what is now your favorite song? I'm betting that you don't. The first time we hear a particular

tune, it is little more than a combination of independent notes. It is only after we hear that tune several times that it begins to grow on us. Only then does that song sink into our conscious and sub-conscious minds. In time, we find ourselves absent-mindedly humming the tune as if we've known it forever. The song of Torah is a tune that we have known forever. You and I stood at Mount Sinai a very long time ago. It's there, deep down in our spiritual sub-conscious. Before a child is born, an angel teaches him the entire Torah, and then causes him to forget it. It's there, deep within our DNA, waiting to be recalled and reviewed. It *"is not hidden or far from you. It is not in Heaven ... Nor is it across the sea ... it is very near to you, in your mouth and your heart, to fulfill it!"* Once you learn a tune, it never leaves you. It becomes second nature. *"Mount Sinai was all in smoke because G-d had come down on it in fire. Its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace. The entire mountain trembled violently. There was the sound of the Shofar, getting louder and louder. Moses spoke and G-d responded with a Voice."* (Exodus, 19:18-19) How's that for inspiration? The sights and sounds! The smoke! The trembling mountain! The Shofar! THE SHOFAR!! Did you ever notice that when you hear an old favorite tune from your past that the music brings your mind back to where you were and what you were doing once upon a time? This Thursday and Friday we will enter our synagogues and once again hear the mournful, mystical sounds of the Shofar. It is nothing new. Let the tune carry you back to Mount Sinai. Remember how we all stood together and participated in that Covenant with G-d. He promised to watch over us, and we promised to observe His Commandments. He'll do His part. Let's you and I do ours. Let us sing G-d's song and we'll make beautiful music together. Have a great Shabbos. May G-d inscribe us all for a happy, healthy, prosperous and peaceful New Year. Rabbi Yerachmiel Sepowitz

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