

Devar Torah (Sermon) for כי תבוא (Ki Tavo)
September 4, 2004
"Hayom"

In less than two weeks from now, we will begin to celebrate the high holidays. We refer to these days as ימים נוראים (*Yamim Noraim*) - *Days of Awe*. They are auspicious, and they are momentous. It's no wonder, then, that one of the most popular songs on those days, is a song titled "היום" (*Hayom*) - Today! [singing: hayom, hayom hayom . . .]. It makes sense to single out our days of awe, our days of judgment. The Biblical equivalent to the היום song is the book of Deuteronomy. This Friday, it struck me how often the word "היום" appears in this week's פרשה (*Parsha*) Torah reading. 14 as a matter of fact. So, when I realized this fact, I did what any computer geek would do. I put in my CD-ROM and started to search the Bible for occurrences of the word "hayom." It turns out that this word comes up 137 times in the Five Books of Moses. I looked at the 137 times that the word היום comes up, and selected every time the word is used to mean "today," (some times the word can mean "the day" or the like).

Now, Benjamin Disrali, once said that there are three kinds of lies - lies, damned lies, and statistics. But here, the results are staggering. It turns out that the word היום meaning "today" occurs 108 times in the Five Books, including 21 occurrences in the book of Genesis, 12 in Exodus, 3 in Leviticus, once in Numbers, and a full 70 times in Deuteronomy. 13 of those occurrences are in this week's Torah reading. In fact, 12% of the occurrences of the word *hayom* as "today" in the Five Books are in this week's reading. The 70 occurrences in Deuteronomy comprise 65% of the occurrences in the Five Books.

So, why is it that the book of Deuteronomy creates this litany - . . . היום . . . היום . . . היום. Today . . . Today . . . Today. Two commentaries that come from רש"י (*Rashi*) on this week's reading may be enlightening. When Deuteronomy 26:16 says "היום ה' אלהיך מצַוֶּךָ" *This day, the Lord your God commands you,* Rashi comments " . . . בכל יום יהיו בעיניך חדשים, היום הזה . . . [means] every day it should be in your eyes as if you were just commanded with them." And when Deut 27:9 says "היום ה' היום הזה נהיית לעם" *today you became a nation* Rashi opines "בכל יום יהיו בעיניך כאילו היום באת עמו בברית" *every day should be in your eyes as if you entered a covenant with God.*

I Think Rashi's read is every poignant understanding of the litany of the word היום in Deuteronomy. After all, Deuteronomy is essentially the farewell address(es) of Moses. And like most, he is concerned that as time passes the memory of him, and the memory of the Jewish experience in the desert will fade. People will forget the closeness of God in the desert - the revelation at Sinai, the manna from heaven etc. Moses, as understood by Rashi reminds us: Treat every day as a new day filled with God's commandments, and with the closeness of the Jews' relationship with God.

The message goes further: We need to see every day as an opportunity. We should always say "היום - Today is the day!" As I read in an e-mail this week "Get a head start on Rosh Hashanah - Come to Shul this Shabbat." No need to wait for Yom Kippur. היום (*hayom*)! Should you start at Rosh Hashannah. No! **Today!** And though we will start saying *selichot* (penetential prayers) next Saturday night, the time to begin repentance is . . . **Today!** It's time to step things up. To do more. To do better. It is time to learn a little bit more Torah. To attend one more service. To do one more act of charity. **היום! היום! היום!**

God, we can't wait! We are ready to step closer to you today. היום תעמצנו (*hayom te'amsenu*) - Strengthen us today to learn your תורה (*Torah*). היום תברכנו (*hayom tevar'chenu*) bless us today with the opportunity, ability and desire to do מצוות (*Mistvot*). היום תקבל ברחמים (*hayom t'kabel berachamim uv'ratson et tefillatenu*) Today, help us become worthy so that you may accept our prayers and repentance. Amen.ept our prayers and repentance. Amen.