

PARSHA WITH

Rabbi Shmuel Brazil



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תשפ"ד PARSHAS VEESCHANAN RAV BRAZIL

## ALLEIGIANCE WITH EYES AND HEART

The *passuk* says *יש לו אלקים קרובים אליו כה' אלקינו* no nation in the world possesses a G-d like ours of whom the Jewish People are so close.

I clearly remember reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America every morning in second grade while facing the flag. Everyone child was required to stand erect at attention, place his **hands** on his **heart**, and recite the words. When one gets older this ceremony becomes more ridiculous than before. I can understand pledging allegiance to a country to an ideal or to a G-d, but to a finite object, a flag from a woven cloth symbol, what does allegiance to it stand for. The words under G-d was not in the original form created in the year 1896 but rather it was added by President Eisenhower in 1954. Also after decades of simmering tensions between southern states who held of slavery and northern ones that were against it there was a Civil War 1861 for five years between the states. Thirty years later we are pledging ourselves to a flag an allegiance to the flag of the **United States**?

In light years of contrast we the Jewish Nation also pledge allegiance to **Hashem** of infinity three times a day by placing our **hands** on our **eyes**. *שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד*. Our Chachmim tell us that without controlling one's eyes and what one sees, it will become super challenging to control his heart and therefore the pledge of the heart will probably never come to fruition. As *Chazal* say *העין רואה והלב חומד* the eye sees and the heart desires.

The *passuk* describes Avraham Avinu's "seeing" *וישא את עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים* he lifted up his eyes and saw three people. From here we see that Avraham made a conscious decision to pick up his eyes to see otherwise he would not see even what is in front of him lest he see something not permitted which would cause within his heart and *middos* a blemish.

When protesters burn the American flag what happens to the stars on the flag? They also burn because they are also created by man as part of the cloth symbol. This is in contrast to Rabbe Chaninah Ben Teradyon of the *עשרה הרוגי מלכות* whom the Romans wrapped his body with a Sefer Torah and began burning the Torah and his flesh. His students saw their Rebbi gazing at something while all this was happening and asked him what he was seeing. He answered "I see the letters of the Torah ascending upwards towards *shamayim* for they cannot be destroyed by natural fire

Our allegiance and devotion to the Torah is not to merely a written scroll or symbol object. The letters and words of the Torah is not only Hashem's infinite wisdom that he gave to Am Yisrael but they are also His *nefesh* as the *gemarah* says that the first word in the *Aseres Hadibros* *אנכי* is the acronym *אנא נפשי* כתבית יהבית. If a Yid really wants to connect to Hashem in a deeper and intimate relationship he must learn study and toil over Torah,

My Rebbi ztl Rav Shlomo Freifeld would love to say over the story of a Dorothy Thompson a goyish woman who worked for the New York Times who was sent as a reporter to two major Jewish historic events in Europe in the year 1897. One was the *Kenissia Hagadol* in Katowice Poland and the other was in Basil Switzerland the First Zionist Congress with Theodore Hertzl. To enter the *Kenissiya* she dressed up like a man. When she returned back to NY she wrote in the article the following. **In Basil I met the Jewish intellect, in Katowice I met the Jewish G-d.** All the *gedolim* and *tzaddikim* radiated with spirituality that even a goy

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could see and sense. This is all because the Torah contains the spirit of Hashem and that spirit radiates in and out of them

*Am Yisrael* are compared to **stars**. When we make our Kiddush Hashem being shoved into gas chambers, shot with bullets, hung, starved to death, burned alive, our cloth Jewish Stars that we were forced to display were also burned up like a flag. However, Hashem's loving expression to His People by calling us the heavenly stars, did not and will not disappear in the fire like the flag. The stars which symbolized the *neshamah* of the Jewish Nation rose from the ashes and came before the *Kisay Hakavod* giving testimony that they died sanctifying Hashem's name and they merited a lofty place in *Gan Eden* basking in eternal closeness and bliss with their Creator.

Gut Shabbos,

Rav Brazil