

PARSHAT NITZAVIM
DEUTERONOMY 29:9-30:20
28 ELUL 5782/ 24 SEPTEMBER 2022



FREE WILL-- A PARADOX? A REALITY?

1. “I have set before you life and goodness, and death and evil: in that I command you this day to Love G-d to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments. Life and death I have set before you, blessing and curse. And you shall choose life.” (Deuteronomy 30:19)
2. “When you come to a fork in the road... take it.” (Yogi Berra)
3. “How can we be “free” as conscious agents if everything that we consciously intend is caused by events in our brain that we do not intend and of which we are entirely unaware?... Free will is actually more than an illusion (or less), in that it cannot be made conceptually coherent. Either our wills are determined by prior causes and we are not responsible for them, or they are the product of chance and we are not responsible for them.” (Sam Harris, Free Will)
4. “Could there then occur something in the world other than that willed by its Maker? Fire burns because G-d wills it to burn. Water flows because G-d wills it to flow. So, too, human beings have free will because G-d wills us to have free will. There is no contradiction.” (Maimonides)
5. “All is foreseen, but permission is given.” (Rabbi Akiva)

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6. “Men believe themselves to be free, because they are conscious of their own actions and are ignorant of the causes by which they are determined.” (Baruch Spinoza)
7. “I do not believe in free will. Schopenhauer's words: 'Man can do what he wants, but he cannot will what he wills,' accompany me in all situations throughout my life and reconcile me with the actions of others, even if they are rather painful to me.” (Albert Einstein.)
8. “Free will is an illusion of the well-functioning brain, a trick of the mind, and oftentimes the joke’s on you. Let go of it; you’ve got nothing to lose, and Nothing to gain. And there’s a big difference between nothing and Nothing, even though I can’t quite tell you what it is.” (Jay Michaelson, Everything is God.)
9. “Had the High Priest...thought for even a minute that he himself had any power and existence of his own, he would have suffered this impediment, which is called by the Torah "an accident." That is, when a person thinks that there is accident in the world without Divine plan, and thus a person thinks that he himself has power of existence of his own, this is haughtiness with which a person is haughty...thinking that he has power to influence events.” (Mordechai Yosef Leiner “*The Ishbitzer*”, Mei HaShiloah)
10. Extra credit: Watch this wonderful lecture by Rabbi Moishe New!
https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/1994469/jewish/Do-We-Really-Have-Free-Will.htm