

חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

by Dr. Joseph Geliebter

Topics discussed

Parashas Nitzavim

- ▶ Those Who are Here and Those Who are Not Here
- ▶ **אֵינָנוּ** and **יְשָׁנוּ** Two perspectives on existence
- ▶ The hidden “yes” within absence
- ▶ Not with us, but with Hashem
- ▶ The future generations stand before Hashem
- ▶ What does “today” mean?
- ▶ A covenant beyond time
- ▶ From “*el kol Yisrael*” to “*kol ish Yisrael*”
- ▶ Moshe Rabbeinu’s words for all generations
- ▶ We are standing today

Parashas Vayelech

- ▶ Moshe’s final words: From rebuke to encouragement
- ▶ A rectification for the

Parashas Nitzavim-Vayelech

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Parashas Nitzavim

Those Who are Here and Those Who are Not Here

אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם בְּלִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם רָאשֵׁיכֶם שְׁבֵטֵיכֶם זְקֵנֵיכֶם וְשָׂרֵיכֶם
כָּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל

“You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d, your heads, your tribes, your elders, and your officers, every man of Israel.”

(Devarim 29:9)

Moshe Rabbeinu gathers Bnei Yisrael for one of his final addresses. He emphasizes the all-encompassing nature of this gathering: “all of you,” and concludes “every member of Israel.” They are all standing today, before Hashem. Yet only a few pesukim later, Moshe reveals that not everyone included in this covenant can actually be seen:

וְלֹא אִתְּכֶם לְבַדְכֶם אֲנִכִּי כֹרֵת אֶת הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְאֶת הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֹּאת. כִּי אֶת
אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׁנוּ פֹה עִמָּנוּ עַמֵּד הַיּוֹם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר אֵינָנוּ פֹה עִמָּנוּ
הַיּוֹם

“Not with you alone do I forge this covenant and this oath, but with whoever is here with us, standing with us today before Hashem our G-d, and with whoever is not here with us today.”

(Devarim 29:13-14)

fear of the spies

- **The emissary who remained faithful**
- **Before the eyes of all Yisrael**
- **Moshe will not go; Hashem will go!**
- **Moshe's voice: The eternity of the Torah**
- **From "to all Yisrael" to "before the eyes of all Yisrael"**

Who are those who are *אֵינָנו פֹּה*, "not here"? Rashi explains: *עַם דּוֹרוֹת הַעֲתִידִים לִהְיוֹת*—the covenant was made also with those who are yet to be, meaning, all the future generations (Rashi, Devarim 29:14). This, however, requires explanation. How can a covenant be made with those who have not yet been born? And why does the Torah describe both those who are present and those who are absent with the repeated word *הַיּוֹם*, "today"? Perhaps these words reveal something about the nature of *כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל*, about the covenant itself, and about Moshe's relationship with every generation that would follow.

אֵינָנו and יֵשׁ Two perspectives on existence

The Torah's wording is precise:

אֲשֶׁר יֵשׁנוּ פֹה
the one who is here,

and

אֲשֶׁר אֵינָנו פֹּה
the one who is not here.

Embedded within these expressions are the most basic terms of existence and absence: *יֵשׁ* and *אֵין*. Yet we should not understand *אֵינָנו* as literal *ayin*, absolute nonexistence. The *meforshim* understand it to mean precisely the opposite, each in his own words and from his own perspective:

Rabbeinu Bachya offers two explanations. In the first, he describes the relationship between the present and future generations as that of a root and its branches:

הָאֵב שֶׁרֶשׁ וְהַבָּנִים הֵם עֲנָפִים הַעֲתִידִים לִצְאָת מִכַּח הַשֶּׁרֶשׁ

"The father is the root, and the children are branches
destined to emerge from the power of the root"
(Rabbeinu Bachya, Devarim 29:13).

Future generations are already contained, in potential, within those who stand before Moshe. The *שֶׁרֶשׁ*, the root, the generation standing before Moshe can therefore bring the future *עֲנָפִים*, branches, future generations, into the covenant.

Rabbeinu Bachya then offers a deeper explanation based upon the teaching of Chazal that *כָּל*

all the souls that had been created from the beginning were present, although their bodies had not yet been created. He reads Moshe's words with remarkable precision: **וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר** *Those future generations were "not here" with us in body, but they were with us that day in soul.*

Indeed, Rabbeinu Bachya suggests that the word **עִמָּנוּ** "with us," should be connected back to **עִמָּנוּ הַיּוֹם** "standing with us today." It is as though the Torah were saying: **וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר אֵינָנוּ פֹּה עִמָּנוּ עוֹמְדֵי הַיּוֹם**, even the one who is not physically here is nevertheless standing with us today.

Rabbeinu Bachya compares this spiritual standing to the language used for the *malachei hashareis*: **בֵּין הָעוֹמְדִים הָאֵלֶּה**, "among those who stand here" (Zechariah 3:7). He further cites Chazal that all the future prophets received their prophecy at Sinai, although they were not given permission to deliver that prophecy until their appointed time. Therefore, one can be "standing" spiritually present long before it becomes manifest within the course of history. Likewise, the future Jew who has not yet been born into this physical world but had a *neshamah* already stood within the covenant.

The *Zohar* presents this idea even more vividly: all the souls of every future generation destined to enter the world were present there: **כְּלֵהוּ קִיְּמוּ תָּמָּן, אֲלֵא דְלֵא** "They all stood there, but they were not visible to the eye." Their absence was only from human sight.

Not with us, but with Hashem

The *Kli Yakar* adds another dimension to this understanding. The Torah refers to one who is **אֵינָנוּ פֹּה עִמָּנוּ**, "not

here with us," yet he is still included in the covenant. The *Kli Yakar* explains this with a striking phrase: **עִמָּנוּ אֵינָנוּ אֲבֵל יֵשֵׁנוּ עִם ה'** – "He is not with us, but he is with Hashem" (*Kli Yakar*, Devarim 29:13). The *neshamos* are always present before Hashem.

Rabbeinu Bachya and the *Kli Yakar* thus illuminate the *pasuk* from two complementary perspectives. Rabbeinu Bachya teaches that the future Jew **אֵינָנוּ פֹּה** he is absent in body, yet **עִמָּנוּ הַיּוֹם** he is present with us in soul. The *Kli Yakar* shifts the perspective still further: **עִמָּנוּ אֵינָנוּ אֲבֵל יֵשֵׁנוּ** from our human vantage point, he has not yet entered history, but before Hashem his existence is already present. The future Jew therefore is not represented by his ancestors alone but rather possesses a spiritual presence within the covenant itself. What appears to us as **אֵינָנוּ** is **יֵשֵׁנוּ** before Hashem.

The hidden "yes" within absence

Perhaps there is an additional *remez* in Moshe's choice of the word **אֵינָנוּ**. In Aramaic, **אֵין** means "yes." Chazal teach that Moshe explained the Torah **בִּשְׁבַעִים לָשׁוֹן**, in seventy languages (Rashi, Devarim 1:5). Perhaps Aramaic allows us to hear another dimension in Moshe's words: **וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר אֵינָנוּ** **פֹּה** refers to the future Jew who appears not to be present. Yet within **אֵין** "absence," we can hear the Aramaic **אֵין** "yes." He is **אֵינָנוּ** and yet, on another level, he is present.

The Torah places these two states side by side: **אֲשֶׁר אֵינָנוּ פֹּה** and **אֲשֶׁר יֵשֵׁנוּ פֹּה**. From our perspective, there is **אֵין**: the future generation is not yet visible. But before Hashem, **יֵשֵׁנוּ** - he is already present. Within the apparent **אֵין** lies an **אֵין** an affirmation that the future Jew already stands before Hashem within the covenant.

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Perhaps we may suggest a *remez* in the word **אֵין**. In Aramaic, **אֵין** means “yes.” Chazal teach that Moshe explained the Torah **בִּשְׁבַּעִים לָשׁוֹן** in seventy languages (Rashi, Devarim 1:5). Perhaps Aramaic allows us to hear another dimension in Moshe’s words.

The Torah says **וְאַתָּה אֵין אֵינוֹ פֹּה**, referring to the future Jew who appears not to be present. Yet within **אֵין**, “absence,” we can hear the Aramaic **אֵין**, “yes.” He is **אֵינוֹ**, and yet, on another level, he is present.

The Torah places these two states side by side: **אֵין אֵינוֹ פֹּה** and **אֵין אֵינוֹ פֹּה**. From our perspective there is **אֵין**: the future generation is not yet visible. But before Hashem, there is already **אֵינוֹ**. Within the apparent **אֵין** lies an **אֵין**, an affirmation that the future Jew already stands before Hashem within the covenant.

The future generations stand before Hashem

The *Tiferes Shlomo* carries this idea a step further. He brings together the opening words **אַתֶּם נֹצְרִים הַיּוֹם בְּלִפְנֵי ה'** with Moshe's declaration that the covenant embraces **אֵין אֵינוֹ פֹּה**. He explains that: **יָכוֹל** He explains that: **יָכוֹל** **לְבָחִינָה זֹאת כְּשִׁישְׁמָעוֹ הַדִּבּוּר מִפִּי הַצַּדִּיק הַדּוֹר שֶׁהוּא בַחֲיָה** **“All the future generations will also merit this aspect when they hear the words from the mouth of the tzaddik of their generation, who is the aspect of Moshe...”** (*Tiferes Shlomo*, Nitzavim). What is **זֹאת**, “this aspect”? It is the state described at the beginning of the parashah: **הַיּוֹם** **נֹצְרִים הַיּוֹם** **בְּלִפְנֵי ה'**. The future generations are therefore not merely bound by a covenant forged long before they were born. They themselves attain the state of standing before Hashem that Moshe describes. They

attain it through the Moshe of their generation.

The progression of the *meforshim* is remarkable. Rabbeinu Bachya teaches that the future Jew who is not yet present **בְּגוֹף** is nevertheless **עִמּוֹ הַיּוֹם בְּנֶפֶשׁ**. *The Kli Yakar* teaches that although he is **אֵינוֹ עִמּוֹ**, he is already **יְשׁוּ עִמּוֹ ה'**. *The Tiferes Shlomo* then teaches that those future generations themselves attain the state of **נֹצְרִים הַיּוֹם** **בְּלִפְנֵי ה'**.

What does “today” mean?

The *Sfas Emes* takes this still further. The word **הַיּוֹם** appears repeatedly throughout this passage. Moshe speaks of **עַמִּיד הַיּוֹם לְפָנֵי ה'**, of those who are **אַתֶּם נֹצְרִים הַיּוֹם**, and even of those who **אֵינוֹ פֹּה עִמּוֹ הַיּוֹם**. On its simplest level, “*hayom*” refers to that historic day toward the end of Moshe's life when Bnei Yisrael entered this covenant.

The *Sfas Emes*, however, teaches that **הַיּוֹם** has a meaning that transcends that particular day **כֹּי פִירוּשׁ בְּכָל יוֹם ...** **“Hayom means every day...”** (*Sfas Emes*, 5634). In a teaching delivered a year later, the *Sfas Emes* explains: **כִּי הַכָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעוֹלָם עוֹמְדִין לְפָנֵי הַקָּדוֹשׁ** **לְבָחִינָה זֹאת כְּשִׁישְׁמָעוֹ הַדִּבּוּר מִפִּי הַצַּדִּיק הַדּוֹר שֶׁהוּא בַחֲיָה** **“All the future generations will also merit this aspect when they hear the words from the mouth of the tzaddik of their generation, who is the aspect of Moshe...”** (*Tiferes Shlomo*, Nitzavim). What is **זֹאת**, “this aspect”? It is the state described at the beginning of the parashah: **הַיּוֹם** **נֹצְרִים הַיּוֹם** **בְּלִפְנֵי ה'**. The future generations are therefore not merely bound by a covenant forged long before they were born. They themselves attain the state of standing before Hashem that Moshe describes. They

A covenant beyond time

In yet another place, in a discussion on the words לְעִבְרָךְ בְּבְרִית ה', the *Sfas Emes* explains that through the *bris* with Hashem, Bnei Yisrael receive a connection to a reality that transcends time: וְהֵם לְמַעַל מִן הַזְמַן בְּכֹחַ זֶה. "Through the power of this covenant they are above time" (*Sfas Emes*, 5658).

Accordingly, the words of the *meforshim* join together. Rabbeinu Bachya teaches that the future Jew who is not yet present בגוף is nevertheless. עֲמָנוּ הַיּוֹם בְּנֶפֶשׁ. The *Kli Yakar* teaches that the future generation, although יֵשְׁנוּ עִם ה' וְעוֹמְדִים is already. אֵינָנוּ עֲמָנוּ, The *Tiferes Shlomo* teaches that those future generations themselves attain the state of בְּלָכֶם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם לִפְנֵי ה' through the continuing *dibbur* of the *tzaddik* of their generation. And the *Sfas Emes* explains how a covenant made on one historic day can remain present for every generation: הַיּוֹם הוּא. "hayom" refers to each and every day, because through this *bris*, Klal Yisrael possesses a dimension that is לְמַעַל מִן הַזְמַן, above time. The future Jew is therefore not merely an heir to the covenant made by his ancestors. He is himself a participant in its continuing. הַיּוֹם Those who were invisible to Moshe's generation eventually enter history. When they do, the Torah does not address them in the past tense. It speaks directly to them in the present: אֲתֵם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם. כל איש ישראל.

From "el kol Yisrael" to "kol ish Yisrael"

This idea of Moshe addressing all generations of Klal Yisrael may illuminate the structure of Sefer Devarim as a whole. Moshe's words in the final sefer of the Torah begins:

אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל

"These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel."

(Devarim 1:1)

The *Kli Yakar* notes that this wording itself is unusual: לֹא מִצִּינוּ בְּכָל הַמִּקְרָא שְׁמֹשֶׁה יְדַבֵּר: "We do not find anywhere in all of Scripture that Moshe addressed all of Israel together as one." Ramban explains that Moshe's exposition of Torah had to occur במעמד כל ישראל, in the presence of all Israel, "For the exposition of the Torah and the completion of the [giving of the] mitzvos had to take place in the presence of all Yisrael, just as at Matan Torah" (Ramban, Devarim 1:1).

The expression then reappears at major turning points of Sefer Devarim. Before reviewing the Aseres HaDibros, וַיִּקְרָא (Devarim 5:1). As he approaches the final covenant, Moshe again calls אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל (Devarim 29:1). And then comes the culmination: אֲתֵם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם בְּלָכֶם... כל איש ישראל.

Perhaps Nitzavim reveals the full meaning of the אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל whom Moshe has been addressing throughout Sefer Devarim. It is not only the generation that was physically present. Moshe himself tells us: וְלֹא אַתֶּם לְבַדְכֶם. Not you alone. His audience includes אֲשֶׁר אֵינָנוּ פֹה, and אֲשֶׁר יֵשְׁנוּ פֹה those who stood before him then and those who would stand before Hashem in every generation to come. כל איש ישראל becomes more than a description of everyone physically assembled before Moshe. In the covenant of Nitzavim, it embraces Klal Yisrael across the generations.

Moshe Rabbeinu's words for all generations

Sefer Devarim contains Moshe Rabbeinu's final words to Klal Yisrael.

Although he would not be entering Eretz Yisrael with them, his parting words were not meant only for that generation. They were given as part of the Torah for Klal Yisrael in every generation.

This may also explain why, after the covenant of Nitzavim comes the mitzvah of *Hakhel*. Future generations were to gather once every seven years to hear the readings from Sefer Devarim:

בבוא כל ישראל לראות את פני ה' אלקיך... תקרא
את התורה הזאת נגד כל ישראל באזניהם.

"When all Israel comes to appear before Hashem your G-d... you shall read this Torah before all Israel, in their hearing."

(Devarim 31:11)

Those who were once included in לפני and stand לפני later gather as לפני and stand לפני. The Torah of Moshe is then read before them anew. In this way, *Hakhel* gives practical expression in each generation to the covenant of Nitzavim.

We are standing today

As human beings, we can only see what stands before us today. We see the יֵשׁ that which has already entered the world and is present before our eyes. Those who have not yet been born are, from our perspective, אֵינָנוּ פֹה; they are not yet visible to us. Yet the covenant of Nitzavim teaches that their absence from our sight does not mean their absence from the covenant. What is not yet present with us is already present before Hashem, and every generation is included in Moshe Rabbeinu's words.

Moshe Rabbeinu therefore speaks to לפני—not only to those standing before him at that time, but to Klal Yisrael in all generations. In Moshe's '*hayom*,' we were included among אֵינָנוּ פֹה. In our own time, we have become יֵשׁנוּ פֹה.

The covenant is therefore not merely an event that took place with the earlier generation. As the *Sfas Emes* says, every generation has its own '*hayom*,' and every generation stands before Hashem anew. Thus, those who are אֵינָנוּ in one generation become יֵשׁנוּ in another, for the covenant extends continually to those who have not yet appeared.

And so, Moshe Rabbeinu's words remain forever in the present tense. They were spoken to כל ישראל, including us:

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם.

You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d.



Parashas Vayelech

Moshe's final words: From rebuke to encouragement

וילך משה וידבר את הדברים האלה אל כל ישראל

"Moshe went and spoke these words to all of Israel."

(Devarim 31:1)

The opening words of Parashas Vayelech sound remarkably familiar. Sefer Devarim itself began: ואלה הדברים אשר אמר משה אל כל ישראל, "These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Israel" (Devarim 1:1). The similarity is difficult to miss. Sefer Devarim opens with הדברים that Moshe spoke to כל ישראל, and now, as Moshe enters the final day of his life, the Torah again tells us Moshe spoke הדברים to כל ישראל.

This parallel, however, is framed by a clear contrast. At the beginning of Sefer Devarim, Moshe approaches כל ישראל with *tochachah* (rebuke). Rashi explains that he refers to their sins only

by allusion, *מִפְּנֵי כְבוֹדֵן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל*, because of the honor of Israel (Rashi, Devarim 1:1). It is rebuke, but it is the gentle and respectful rebuke of a leader who loves his people. Now, near the conclusion of the *sefer*, on the last day of his life in this world, Moshe again speaks *אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל*, but the dominant tone is one of warmth and encouragement. Moshe knows that he will not accompany them across the Yarden. He must prepare them to enter Eretz Yisrael without the leader who has guided them for forty years, and his words are therefore filled with *chizuk*.

חֲזָקוּ וְאַמְצוּ אֶל תִּירְאוֹ וְאַל תַּעֲרָצוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא הַהֹלֵךְ עִמָּךְ לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ וְלֹא יַעֲזֹבְךָ

"Be strong and courageous. Do not fear and do not be broken before them, for Hashem your G-d, He is the One Who goes with you; He will not weaken you nor forsake you."

(Devarim 31:6)

The resemblance between the opening of Devarim and the opening of Vayelech is not just a matter of similar wording. In explaining the phrase *אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל* here, the *Kli Yakar* explicitly refers back to the first *pasuk* of Devarim. He explains that there it says "to all Yisrael," and here it says "to all Yisrael. Just as there, the words were words of *mussar*, so too here, before speaking about his departure, Moshe spoke to them words of *mussar* and *teshuvah*. Indeed, points out the *Kli Yakar*, it says *וַיְדַבֵּר*, which indicates *דְּבַר קָשֶׁה שֶׁל מוֹסֵר*, stern words of rebuke. Elsewhere, the *Kli Yakar* points out that the word *וַיֵּלֶךְ* further teaches that Moshe went personally among the people to stir them to *teshuvah* (*Kli Yakar*, Devarim 31:1). The two ideas, words of rebuke on the one hand and words of encouragement on the other hand, need

not conflict. Moshe's final words still contain *mussar* and a call to *teshuvah*, but as he prepares to leave his people, he also recognizes their need for confidence, courage, and reassurance. There is a time to address the past, and a time to strengthen people for the future.

Answering the fear of the Meraglim

As we consider Moshe's words of *chizuk* (encouragement), another parallel emerges. Near the beginning of Sefer Devarim, Moshe recounts the tragedy of the Meraglim at length. The spies had returned from Eretz Yisrael and destroyed the confidence of the nation. They had frightened the people into believing that the land Hashem had promised them could not be conquered. Moshe then tried to reassure and strengthen them:

לֹא תַעֲרָצוּ וְלֹא תִירְאוּ מֵהֶם. ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַהֹלֵךְ לִפְנֵיכֶם הוּא יִלָּחֶם לָכֶם

"Do not be broken and do not fear them. Hashem your G-d, Who goes before you, He will fight for you."

(Devarim 1:29-30)

But the people did not listen. Fear had already overwhelmed them, and that entire generation lost the privilege of entering Eretz Yisrael. Now, on the final day of Moshe's life, he speaks to their children in almost the same language: *חֲזָקוּ וְאַמְצוּ אֶל תִּירְאוֹ וְאַל תַּעֲרָצוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם*, "Be strong and courageous. Do not fear and do not be broken before them" (Devarim 31:6). The connection is clear, the language is almost identical: *לֹא תַעֲרָצוּ וְלֹא תִירְאוּ מֵהֶם* has now become *אֶל תִּירְאוֹ וְאַל תַּעֲרָצוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם*, and *ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא הַהֹלֵךְ עִמָּךְ* is now *ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַהֹלֵךְ לִפְנֵיכֶם*. The Ramban himself places these two passages alongside one another. In explaining why Moshe's fear of Og could not have been an ordinary fear of military

strength, the Ramban points to Moshe as the one who had warned Israel, **אל תיראו** (Devarim 31:6), and who had earlier rebuked them for their fear following the sin of the Meraglim, saying, **לא תעצבון ולא תיראון מהם... ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוא הנלחם** (Devarim 1:29–30) (Ramban, Bamidbar 21:34).

Perhaps Moshe is deliberately returning to the moment when the first generation failed. Thirty-nine years earlier, he had urged their fathers not to fear, and they did not accept his words. Now he stands before their children, once again at the threshold of Eretz Yisrael, and delivers the message again. This time, however, he begins with two words of strength and active encouragement: **חזקו ואמץ**. Be strong. Have courage. The first generation had heard voices telling them that they could not succeed. Moshe's final message to their children is that they can succeed, and with Hashem's help, they will succeed.

The emissary who remained faithful

There is another remarkable dimension here, at this moment. After strengthening the nation, Moshe calls Yehoshua forward:

ויקרא משה ליהושע ויאמר אליו לעיני כל ישראל חזק ואמץ כי אתה תבוא את העם הזה אל הארץ אשר נשבע ה' לאבותם לתת להם ואמה תנחילנה אותם

"Moshe called Yehoshua and said to him before the eyes of all Israel: Be strong and courageous, for you shall come with this people to the land that Hashem swore to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it."

(Devarim 31:7)

The change from plural to singular is significant. First Moshe told the people **חזקו ואמץ**. Now he is telling their new

leader **חזק ואמץ**. Yehoshua, in addition to being Moshe's successor, is also one of the two surviving witnesses to the very episode whose damage Moshe now seems determined to overcome. Yehoshua had been one of the twelve emissaries. When the others frightened Klal Yisrael, Yehoshua and Kalev stood before the people and declared: **ואתם אל תיראו את עם הארץ... וה' אִתָּנוּ אל תיראם**, "Do not fear the people of the land... Hashem is with us; do not fear them" (Bamidbar 14:9).

Yehoshua had already delivered his own message of *chizuk* to the people: **אל תיראו... וה' אִתָּנוּ**. But no one had listened. The people had become so consumed by fear that they threatened to stone Yehoshua and Kalev. Now, nearly forty years later, the very man whose words of encouragement had been rejected stands beside Moshe. This time he will not merely tell Klal Yisrael that they can enter the land – he will lead them there.

This connection is already indicated near the beginning of Sefer Devarim. In Moshe's retelling of the sin of the Meraglim, he recalls Hashem's instruction: **יהושע בן נון העמד לפניך הוא יבא ושמה יחושע בן נון חזק כי הוא ינחילנה את ישראל**, "Yehoshua bin Nun, who stands before you, he will enter there; strengthen him, for he will cause Israel to inherit it" (Devarim 1:38). The command is **חזק**, "strengthen him." Now, on Moshe's final day, that is instruction is fulfilled: **חזק ואמץ... ואמה תנחילנה אותם**. The same account that records the failure of the Meraglim already identifies Yehoshua as the future leader and commands that he be strengthened. In Parashas Vayelech the same faithful representative who had said from the beginning that the land could be conquered, is now strengthened publicly to guide Klal Yisrael into it.

Before the Eyes of All Israel

The Torah begins its account of Moshe's final transfer of leadership by emphasizing that it occurred *לְעֵינֵי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל*, and it later concludes the entire Torah with those identical words. Ramban teaches that the transfer of leadership to Yehoshua had to occur publicly so that the people would trust him and accept his leadership (Ramban, Bamidbar 27:19). The *Kli Yakar* goes further: the eyes of Israel are upon their leader, *וּמִמֶּנּוּ יֵרָאוּ וְכֵן יַעֲשׂוּ* from him they will see and so will they do (*Kli Yakar*, Devarim 31:7). The courage of the leader becomes the courage of the people.

Perhaps, then, the repetition of *לְעֵינֵי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל* suggests a defining quality of Moshe's leadership. At one defining moment, when the survival of the nation demanded it, he had been prepared to shatter the Luchos. *לְעֵינֵי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל*. And at the end of his life, he was equally prepared to strengthen his successor *לְעֵינֵי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל* and publicly transfer the leadership to him. One moment required the courage to break something precious. The other required humility and strength to build up the person who would replace him. In both instances, Moshe acts not for himself, but for the future of Klal Yisrael.

Rashi famously explains the Torah's final words, *אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה מֹשֶׁה לְעֵינֵי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל*, as referring to Moshe's breaking of the Luchos before their eyes (Rashi, Devarim 34:12). I have not found a *mefarsh* who explicitly connects the two appearances of *לְעֵינֵי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל*, but the verbal parallel is striking. In Vayelech, moreover, the public strengthening of Yehoshua is particularly important in light of the Meraglim. The people had once refused to believe Yehoshua, when he assured them that Hashem was with

them and that they could conquer the land. Now Moshe makes certain that the next generation sees Yehoshua differently. He places him before them, strengthens him before their eyes, and publicly establishes him as the leader who will bring them into the land.

Moshe will not go, but Hashem will

There is a particularly moving point we may discern from Moshe's words. He has just told the people, *כֵּן הַיּוֹם אֲנִי עוֹד לֵצֵאת וְלָבוֹא וְהָיִיתִי שָׁנָה אֶחָד וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה* "I am one hundred and twenty years old today; I can no longer go out and come in, and Hashem has said to me: 'You shall not cross this Yarden'" (Devarim 31:2). Near the beginning of Sefer Devarim, in the recounting of the tragedy of the Meraglim, Moshe had already mentioned that he too would not enter the land: *גַּם בִּי הָיָה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִלְלָתִי לֵאמֹר גַּם אֲתָה לֹא תָבוֹא שָׁמָּה* "Hashem became angry with me as well because of you, saying: You, too, shall not come there" (Devarim 1:37).

That reality has now arrived. Moshe cannot cross the Yarden. Nevertheless, when Moshe speaks here, the emphasis is not placed on his inability to enter, but on the fact that Klal Yisrael will not be left without guidance. He tells them, *ה' אֶלְלֹכֶיךָ הוּא עֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ*, "Hashem your G-d, He is crossing before you" (Devarim 31:3), and he tells Yehoshua, *וְה' הוּא הַהֹלֵךְ לְפָנֶיךָ הוּא יִהְיֶה עִמָּךְ*, "Hashem, He is the One Who goes before you; He will be with you" (Devarim 31:8). Moshe will not go before them, but Hashem will.

That is perhaps one of Moshe Rabbeinu's greatest acts of leadership. He prepares the nation to succeed without him. He does not make their confidence dependent upon his presence. He directs

their confidence toward Hashem, while publicly strengthening the leader who will take his place. The leadership changes, but the Divine guidance remains.

Moshe's voice will remain

ויכתב משה את התורה הזאת ויתנהג אל הכהנים
בני לוי הנשאים את ארון ברית ה' ואל כל זקני ישראל,
"Moshe wrote this Torah and gave it to
the Kohanim, the sons of Levi, who carry
the Ark of Hashem, and to all the elders
of Israel" (Devarim 31:9). Moshe's
physical leadership will end, but his
Torah will remain.

He commands that at the
conclusion of every Shemittah cycle, Klal
Yisrael must gather: את כל ישראל לראות את
פני ה' אלקיך... תקרא את התורה הזאת נגד כל ישראל
באותו היום "When all Israel comes to appear
before Hashem your G-d... you shall read
this Torah before all Israel, in their
hearing" (Devarim 31:11). Moshe makes
the gathering comprehensive: הקהל את העם
האנשים והנשים והטרף וגרך אשר בשעריך,
"Gather the people, the men, the women, the
children, and your stranger who is within
your gates" (Devarim 31:12). Chazal teach
that at Hakhel, the king reads selections
from Sefer Devarim (Mishnah Sotah 7:8).
Every seven years a new ישראל
assembles, and Moshe's words are heard
once again.

Moshe declares at the covenant of
Nitzavim: אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם...
and revealed that his
covenant extends even to עמנו
אשר איננו פה עמנו the generations not yet physically
present. Vayelech now tells us what
happens when those generations arrive.
They too gather לראות את פני ה', and they
too hear התורה הזאת. The Sf'as Emes taught
regarding Nitzavim that היום הוא בכל יום

the *hayom* of Moshe's covenant is
renewed in every generation. Hakhel
gives that idea, physical expression. The
generation that had once been איננו פה now
stands before Hashem and hears Moshe's
Torah for itself.

לעיני כל ישראל to אף כל ישראל From

There is a distinct structure across
final Sefer of Torah's. Moshe It begins, אלה
אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל.
Near the end, וילך משה וידבר את הדברים האלה אל כל
ישראל. Moshe then strengthens Yehoshua
נגד כל ישראל establishes Hakhel כל ישראל
and the Torah concludes
Moshe's life with the words כל ישראל לעיניו.

At the beginning of Sefer Devarim,
Moshe recalls the past and reviews the
places where Klal Yisrael had erred,
including the episode of the Meraglim
and the fear that followed it. On his final
day, however. in Parashas Vayelech, as
the entry into Eretz Yisrael draws near,
Moshe directs Klal Yisrael toward the
future. He strengthens the nation with
הזקק strengthens Yehoshua with ואמצי,
assures Kal Yisrael that Hashem will
go before them, leaves them the Torah,
and establishes כל ישראל באתניהם
the mitzvah of Hakhel, which will continue
speaking to כל ישראל long after Moshe's
physical presence has left us.

The first generation had stood at
the border of Eretz Yisrael and said in
despair that they could not enter. Moshe's
final message to their children is resolute:
*Do not be afraid. Hashem is with you. You
can go forward, Yehoshua will lead you, and
you will enter the land. With strength and
confidence.* הזקק ואמצי

Maharal Tzintz ב-י-ל-א ואמו

PEARLS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE GAON FROM PLOTZK

Parashas Nitzavim

The Greatness of the Jew

It says in our parashah:

אַתֶּם נִצְבִּים הַיּוֹם כְּלֶכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם... לְעָבְדוֹ בְּבְרִית ה' אֱלֹהֵיךְ וּבְאַלְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֵיךְ כָּרַת עִמָּךְ הַיּוֹם.

"You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d... to enter into the covenant of Hashem your G-d and His oath, which Hashem your G-d is establishing with you today" (Devarim 29:9-11).

The concept of *נִצְבִּים לִפְנֵי ה'*, "standing before Hashem," which appears at the opening of Parashas Nitzavim, receives a profound and unique interpretation in the teachings of Rabbeinu the Maharal Tzintz. Rabbeinu gives these words deep existential and philosophical meaning, illuminating the significance of every individual member of Bnei Yisrael standing before the Creator. Rabbeinu establishes two fundamental principles here.

First principle: the significance of every action

The first principle teaches that there is a system of reward and punishment. Every action performed by a Jew, whether a minor mitzvah or an *aveirah*, does not disappear into a void. It has an effect and receives its due response in Heaven. The spiritual world responds to every movement, word, and action of a Jew in this world.

Second principle: the source of reward and punishment is the infinite importance of the Jew

The greatest and most inspiring *chiddush* lies in the second principle, which explains why the system of reward and punishment exists. Why should Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the Creator of all the worlds, concern Himself with the actions of a mortal human being?

The answer is:

His immense intrinsic importance and value.

- **The value of even the lowliest person:** The Torah emphasizes that everyone is present, from the heads of the tribes to "your woodcutters and your water drawers." Our Sages learn from this that no Jew is invisible or insignificant before Hashem. Even one who feels that he stands at the lowest spiritual or social level is intrinsically beloved and important to the Creator.
- **The aspect of reward—the magnitude of the mitzvah:** Because a person is so important, every mitzvah and good deed he performs, even the smallest, arouses tremendous joy in Heaven. Hakadosh Baruch Hu regards that deed as

exceedingly precious, and from this importance comes an indescribably great reward.

- **The aspect of punishment—the magnitude of the responsibility:** Surprisingly, this is also the source of punishment. If a person's actions were unimportant, the Creator could simply "ignore" his *aveiros*. But because every Jew is a child of the King, and his actions determine and influence what occurs in the higher worlds, his sin carries great weight.

Rabbeinu derives these principles from the *pesukim* of the parashah, demonstrating how the concepts of reward, punishment, and the importance of man are interwoven and contained within the words of the *pesukim* themselves and within the names of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

The following twofold combination emphasizes and establishes these ideas.

The first allusion: the combination of the names "Hashem Elokeichem"

As is known from the teachings of Chazal, the names of Hakadosh Baruch Hu express different modes of Divine conduct in the world:

- **The name Havayah (Hashem)** represents *middas harachamim*, the attribute of mercy—the abundance, goodness, and reward granted to a person beyond the strict measure of justice.
- **The name Elokim (Elokeichem)** represents *middas hadin*, the attribute of judgment—the judgment and punishment imposed for *aveiros*.

When the Torah opens with the words *אתם נצבים היום בלפני ה' אלקיכם*, "You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d," it joins these two names together. This combination teaches that because of every Jew's "standing," i.e., his stature, his importance before the Creator, he faces both of these modes of Divine conduct. His actions are viewed both through *middas harachamim*, through which he receives reward for fulfilling Hashem's will, and through *middas hadin*, through which punishment is imposed. It is precisely because the actions of every individual are important and desired that he is punished for failing to fulfill Hashem's will.

The second allusion: "In the covenant of Hashem your G-d and His oath"

The *pesukim* then explain the nature of this "standing"/stature: *לעברך בבְרִית ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּבְאֻמָּתוֹ*, "to enter into the covenant of Hashem your G-d and His oath." Here too, there is a deliberate twofold expression:

- **The covenant** embodies the promise, the eternal bond, and the attribute of benevolence and reward established by Hakadosh Baruch Hu with our forefathers and with us, to bestow goodness and blessing upon us.
- **The oath, or curse**, embodies the aspect of punishment and deterrence. It makes clear that abandoning the Torah and mitzvos carries serious consequences.

The conclusion: man's importance is the reason for both judgment and mercy

These two allusions lead to the same fundamental point. The tremendous significance of a Jew's actions, whether for good or for the opposite, does not result from distance, but precisely from his closeness to Hashem and his immense importance.

"Man stands before Hashem his G-d." Because he is so precious and valued in the eyes of the Creator, and because Hakadosh Baruch Hu chose to establish a covenant with him, even his slightest movement has universal significance. *Middas harachamim* and *middas hadin*, the covenant and the oath, all function together to express the absolute seriousness and importance with which Hakadosh Baruch Hu regards every Jewish soul.

The lesson that emerges: The system of reward and punishment actually reflects the love and importance that Hakadosh Baruch Hu accords every Jew. This knowledge is not intended to frighten a person. On the contrary, it is intended to elevate him, grant him a deep sense of responsibility, and teach him that no moment or action of his life is without value.

At times, amid the strain of daily life, difficulties, worries, or feelings of insignificance, a person may forget who he truly is and how valuable value is. But the simple and profound truth of the Torah is that the value of every Jew is infinite.

Always remember: Hakadosh Baruch Hu believes in you! He has given you a unique soul and a special mission in this world that no one else can fulfill. Step forward with Jewish pride, with joy, with an awareness of your own worth, and with the knowledge that every good deed you perform reverberates through the worlds and brings great light to the entire world.

Dear Jew, recognize your greatness and the power of your *neshamah*!

Parashas Vayelech

The "sealing" of the Torah at Moshe Rabbeinu's passing

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם: בֵּן מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה אָנֹכִי הַיּוֹם, לֹא אוּכַל עוֹד לֵצֵאת וּלְבוֹא.

"Moshe went and spoke these words to all Yisrael. He said to them: 'I am one hundred and twenty years old today; I can no longer go out and come in'" (Devarim 31:1-2).

Rabbeinu, the Maharal Tzintz, illuminates how these words touch upon one of the deepest principles in the hidden dimension of Torah and Jewish thought, a principle the Rishonim (such as the Ramban, for example, in his introduction to the Torah) elaborate on at length:

The entire Torah is composed of the names of Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

In light of this principle, Rabbeinu divides the opening pasuk of the parashah. The words וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה, "Moshe went," refer to the period extending until the day of his

passing. By contrast, **וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל**, "he spoke these words to all Yisrael," refers to the day of his passing itself. This opens the way to a profound new understanding of the nature of Moshe Rabbeinu's writing of the Torah and his unique role as the transmitter of the Torah to Bnei Yisrael.

The explanation is as follows.

1. The essence of the Torah: "The names of Hakadosh Baruch Hu"

As Rabbeinu taught in Parashas Va'eschanan concerning the pasuk **זֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מֹשֶׁה**, "And this is the Torah that Moshe placed" (Devarim 4:44), in its innermost essence, the Torah is not merely a book of laws and events in the form in which it appears before us. Rather, all the letters and words of the Torah combine to form sacred names that express the Divine essence and the channels through which the Creator gives life to the world and governs it. On this level, the Torah is entirely Divine and abstract, beyond human comprehension. Its events and mitzvos have not yet assumed the form in which they are manifested in this physical world.

2. Moshe's role: "that Moshe placed"

The words **אֲשֶׁר שָׂם מֹשֶׁה לִפְנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**, "that Moshe placed before Bnei Yisrael," teach us about Moshe Rabbeinu's unique power. Moshe took this Divine light, these sacred names, and clothed them within words, events that occurred in his time, and practical mitzvos for Bnei Yisrael. Moshe was the conduit who brought these names down into this world and transformed them into the Sefer Torah that stands before us. The Torah is therefore called by his name: **תּוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי**, "the Torah of Moshe, My servant" (Malachi 3:22).

For example, Rabbeinu explains that had Korach and the Meraglim not chosen to sin, and had their deeds not actually occurred, the Torah would not have been "different," G-d forbid. Rather, the combinations of the sacred names within the Torah would have been clothed in a different form.

3. The depth in the division of the verse into 1) "Moshe went" and 2) "he spoke these words"

Throughout all of Moshe Rabbeinu's years in the desert, he was continuously rising to higher levels, day by day. There can be no doubt that as he taught more and more Torah to the Jewish people, he himself was rising in a manner that cannot be measured or assessed. And this is the meaning of **וַיֵּלֶךְ**, "he went." Moshe was a **הוֹלֵךְ**, one who advances; he did not remain on one level. Chazal explain the pasuk **וְנָתַתִּי לָךְ מִהֲלָכִים בֵּין הָעֹמְדִים הָאֵלֶּה**, "I will grant you passage among these who stand" (Zechariah 3:7) to mean that the angels "stand" continuously at the same level, whereas tzaddikim "advance," rising from one level to another. Therefore, throughout all those years, **וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה**, "Moshe went." As Moshe Rabbeinu continued to advance, the Torah likewise continued to be "clothed" in the events that occurred during his lifetime.

On the day of his passing, however, there was no further “advancing,” for Moshe Rabbeinu had reached the state of **לֹא אוֹכֵל עוֹד לְצֵאת וּלְבוֹא**, “I can no longer go out and come in.” As Chazal explain, he could no longer “go out and come in” in words of Torah. Therefore, on the day of his passing, Moshe Rabbeinu spoke **הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה**, “these words,” in their present form, exactly as they were, without further change. On that day, the Torah was completed and assumed its final garment. When Moshe Rabbeinu’s ascent came to an end, the final garment of the names of Hakadosh Baruch Hu was sealed and established within the Torah as it now stands before us, as “these words.”

In light of this, Rabbeinu explains the words **בְּן מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה אֲנֹכִי הַיּוֹם**, “I am one hundred and twenty years old today.” The pasuk means that only on that day was it finally established that Moshe’s lifetime would be one hundred and twenty years. For we find that Moshe Rabbeinu prayed to Hakadosh Baruch Hu to prolong his life and allow him to enter Eretz Yisrael. The Maharsha asks concerning this (*Yevamos* 49b): Chazal interpret the pasuk **וְהָיוּ יָמָיו מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה**, “His days shall be one hundred and twenty years” (*Bereishis* 6:3), as referring to Moshe Rabbeinu. Once the Torah had already stated that Moshe would live for one hundred and twenty years, how could he pray for Hakadosh Baruch Hu to prolong his life?

The answer is that as long as Moshe Rabbeinu was alive, the “garment” of the Torah had not yet been sealed, and the Torah could still have been clothed in different words. Had Hakadosh Baruch Hu accepted his prayer to enter Eretz Yisrael and continue living in the physical world, the pasuk **וְהָיוּ יָמָיו**, “His days shall be,” would have been written differently. Only on this day, when Moshe’s ascent came to an end with **לֹא אוֹכֵל עוֹד לְצֵאת וּלְבוֹא**, “I can no longer go out and come in,” and the Torah was sealed, was the pasuk **וְהָיוּ יָמָיו מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה**, “His days shall be one hundred and twenty years,” established in its final form. This is what Moshe meant when he said: **בְּן מֵאָה וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה**, “I am one hundred and twenty years old today.”

What lesson can we derive from these ideas? We must utilize the days of our lives by being among those who “advance,” constantly rising to higher levels.

As long as the candle is burning, it is still possible to repair!



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