



## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS  
RCA ISRAEL REGION

NITZAVIM

In memory of **Evelyn Rivers a"h**  
**חיה פעסא בת אהרן זלמן הכהן ע"ה**  
Mother of Reuven Tradburks

### PARSHAT NITZAVIM

Parshat Nitzavim is the first of 4 very short parshiot that conclude the Torah. The last parsha of the Torah is read on Simchat Torah. Our parsha and the following 2 have a total of 122 verses – the size of an average parsha. So, we are virtually at the end of the Torah.

Last week in Parshat Ki Tavo, Moshe spoke of the distant future. Though not yet in the Land, Moshe gave a chilling description of exile from the Land.

And in our parsha, he looks into the even more distant future; the end of the exile and the return to the Land.

Our parsha is hopeful. Optimistic. We will return to G-d and He will return us to our Land.

The Talmud (Megilla 31b) says Ezra made a decree to read Ki Tavo the Shabbat before Rosh Hashana. Tosafot points out that we don't do that. We read Nitzavim before Rosh Hashana, Ki Tavo 2 weeks before Rosh Hashana.

You are warmly invited  
to join us for the 23<sup>rd</sup> Azkarah  
for our precious son and brother

**Yoni Jesner** **Hy"r**

which will take place at 10am  
Erev Sukkot (Monday, October 6<sup>th</sup>)  
Har HaMenuchoth

Because we prefer the reassurance of Nitzavim as a prelude to Rosh Hashana. That we have the power of teshuva in us. We prefer entering Rosh Hashana with optimism rather than with dread. Nitzavim, not Ki Tavo.

Although this parsha has but 40 verses, the emotional impact is profound.



#### 1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 29:9-11)

**The Brit of Arvot Moav.** All the people are gathered, men, women, children, water carriers and wood choppers to enter the covenant.

We have had covenants before in the Torah. A covenant was made with Avraham; another at Sinai. Striking in this covenant is 2 things: specific people and the word Hayom that appears 4 times in 6 verses.

The previous covenants were made with the people as a whole. A deal or covenant made with a nation could allow us to hide: it doesn't apply to me personally, but to the nation. You all take care of it. Moshe says, there is no hiding: you are all included, men, women, common folk. And this is not ancient, old news. It is today. As if Moshe is saying, "I am not making this covenant on my today – but for you, readers, this covenant is being made on your today." All of you are in; present and future generations. No hiding.



#### 2ND ALIYA (29:12-14)

To enter the covenant; that G-d will be our G-d and we will be His people. As was said to the Avot. This covenant is with you here today and those not here.

The sealing of the covenant here is on the cusp of entering the Land. This is not the first

covenant. The first brit was the promise: I will give you the Land of Israel. And now, I am doing it. Entering the Land is G-d delivering on his promise in the covenant to Avraham.

Promises are easy. Keeping them is the trick.

Maybe this covenant is different, coming on the cusp of seeing promises fulfilled. And this covenant is personal. You. And me. You, G-d will be my G-d. And we will be Your people.



### 3RD ALIYA (29:15-28)

Should there be amongst you those chasing idols, rationalizing that they are free to follow their hearts; the consequence of the special bond of this covenant is that your disloyalty, your chasing idol worship will be met with Divine wrath. The destruction of this Land because of your unfaithfulness will be so profound people will look at it and be shocked by its utter desolation. They will recognize that your disloyalty resulted in this desolation and in your being tossed out of this Land.

The Land of Israel is described repeatedly as a land flowing with milk and honey. Yet here, in the wake of disloyalty, all that milk and honey bounty will be replaced by desolation.

We, the privileged who live in this Land are familiar with this desolation. The rocky, grassless, treeless topography of Israel is jarring to the eye, certainly to us who hail from countries of lush meadows and trees. Something bad happened to this Land of milk and honey.

Moshe tells us: the Land is a reflection of the intimacy or the distance of our bond with G-d, and He with us. The desolation isn't good news. The Ramban maintains that the Land is not permanently sentenced to being barren and desolate; as long as it is in non-Jewish hands, the topography will remain rough. Once returned to Jewish hands, the green returns.

Oh, how fortunate are the eyes, our eyes, who

have seen the green return, the green that is the result of the Divine wink.



### 4TH ALIYA (30:1-6)

When you are cast out of the Land to the 4 corners of the earth, you will take to heart your fate – and return to G-d. He will return to you, returning to you to gather you from the far-flung places. Even if you are at the ends of the earth, He will gather you and take you from there, to bring you back to this Land.

This is the most beautiful paragraph in the entire Torah. It is so good it is split in the middle, to savor it. It is called Parshat HaTeshuva, the section of Return. The word “return” appears 7 times. We to Him. He to us. We take a step; He steps to us. But our first return is described as “we take it to heart”. Heart murmurings are the beginning of teshuva. And He is our cardiologist, He knows our murmurings, as faint as they may be. Once He senses those murmurings, He empowers us, Gives us strength, the will to build on our deepest pining. He waits for us to take the first step. Then He gives us more strength and more. Just take that step.



### 5TH ALIYA (30:7-10)

And He will implant in you love of Him. And you will return to Him. And He will be thrilled with you because your return is with sincerity, a full heart.

He plants in us love of Him. And we return with a full heart.

Moshe chooses words in Sefer Devarim that

לעילוי נשמת

**Dr. David M. Feigenbaum z"l**

**On the occasion of his 8<sup>th</sup> yearzeit**

**ט' תשרי**

***Renee Rabinowitz and Family***

are words of affection. There is lots of love, love of Hashem, lots of heart, all your heart. Words like life, good, cleave to Hashem, today.

Moshe does not want to be only the teacher of halacha. He wants to be the teacher of our inner life as well. We need tutelage in not only *what to do*, but also in *how to feel*. Our feelings: let Him in, with love, with the deepest feelings of your heart, every day. The language is noticeably more emotive than the rest of the Torah. Moshe, as he is departing as leader, and departing from this world desperately wants to convey depth, to convey emotion, to convey to us that loyalty must be more than mere actions. It has to be love.



#### 6TH ALIYA (30:11-14)

For this mitzvah is not sublime, as if needing one to ascend the heavens or cross the ocean to retrieve it. Rather it is very close; on your lips and in your heart.

This short paragraph is striking in its beauty. It may be understood to be referring to the entire Torah. As if to say, "I know the Torah looks daunting; but it is not, it is the real you."

Or it could be referring to Teshuva. As if to say, "Change looks daunting; but it is not change, it is the real you."

Moshe is expressing his faith in us. That deep down, everyone has a connection to G-d and to the Jewish people. That is exactly what this verse says; we don't need to adjust, to adapt to a belief in G-d. We need to be sensitive to, to plumb our real selves, to dig deep and discover ourselves. It is close: on our lips and in our heart.



#### 7TH ALIYA (30:15-20)

Life and good, death and evil lie before you. Life is a consequence of loyalty to the mitzvot. Destruction awaits lack of loyalty. Heaven and earth stand witness: life and death, blessing and curse lie before you.

Choose life.

These words are the last of Moshe's long speech. He will move on to speak of transition of leadership. But these last words are like a tincture, a dilution. After all is said and done, the stakes of this grand venture of mitzvot are nothing short of life and death. And with these words, Moshe prepares to take leave of the people. Nothing more to say. Choose life. ■

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### ROSH HASHANA

In memory of Evelyn Rivers a"h  
חוה פעסא בת אהרן זלמן הכהן ע"ה  
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#### ROSH HASHANA - DAY 1.

The Torah reading for the first day is Genesis, Chapter 21, v. 1-34. This chapter describes the birth of Yitzchak, the insistence of Sarah to send Yishmael away, and Hagar and Yishmael's near death in the desert before being saved. It concludes with a pact made between Avraham and Avimelech in Beer Sheva.



##### ALIYA 1.

The promise made to Avraham and Sarah is granted and Yitzchak is born.

In describing the birth, the phrase "as He said" appears 3 times in the first 2 verses. That is the reason this is read on Rosh Hashana. The theme of Zichronot is not that G-d remembers – obviously He does. But that His promises are realized on His schedule. They take time; sometimes a very long time. Zichronot means

that He does what He promises, acts on what He says. He granted to Sarah the child that He promised.



##### ALIYA 2.

Sarah says "all who hear of this birth will laugh". Hence Yitzchak. Sarah demands that Hagar and Yishmael be sent off, for Yitzchak alone is our future. While Avraham does not like this, Hashem tells him that Sarah is correct, for Yitzchak is the Jewish future.

There could be no better description of Jewish history than the laugh that is incredulous. A laugh expressing how incredulous this birth is. Sarah knew not how incredulous our history would truly be.



##### ALIYA 3.

Avraham awakens early to send Hagar and Yishmael away. They go to Beersheva. She cannot bear to see the death of her son. An angel calls to her that her son is saved as G-d heard the voice of the child; he too will be a great nation. She opens her eyes and sees water and they drink. He grows and becomes an archer.

This is a parallel story to the Akeida we will read tomorrow. In fact, the parallels are striking: Early in the morning, journey off, with a son, near death, the angel calls, her eyes are opened.

The blatant juxtaposition of Yishmael's near death with his mother to Yitzchak's near death with his father demands attention. Parallel stories in the Torah are not only to show similarities but to note the differences.

And while there are striking similarities,

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the difference is dramatic: Divine command. Hagar and Yishmael are sent away by Sarah. Avraham and Yitzchak are submitting to the Divine Command. One story is earthly, the other heavenly.

Yishmael's near death on earth, saved by an angel, teaches us G-d's love for all – but lacking any reach for G-d by man. G-d reaches for man, but there is no reach by man for G-d.

Yitzchak's near death, at the behest of G-d, is the reach of G-d for man and man's reach in return for G-d. It is an encounter, a story of faith, of struggle of man with G-d.

Rosh Hashana has a universal theme, the day of creation of all mankind. But the parallel to the story of Yitzchak and the Akeida is to highlight the difference. There are many great nations, all G-d's children. But some are rooted in this world; Yishmael becomes a great warrior archer. And some elevate above this world, engaging their Creator, bound by a covenant. There is only one Jewish people.



#### ALIYA 4.

Avimelech makes a pact with Avraham because "G-d is with you in all you do".

This too is a promise fulfilled. Avraham was promised he would have a great name. His fame has come to be. G-d promises and fulfills those promises.



#### ALIYA 5.

They call the name of the location Beersheva from the word oath, or pact.

Theirs is an earthly pact, ours a Divine one.

## ROSH HASHANA - DAY 2.

The Torah reading is the 24 verses of Genesis, Chapter 22. This story, Akeidat Yitzchak, the binding of Isaac is the most dramatic

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expression of how far man is willing to go in his allegiance to G-d. While it is a complex story of conflicted commands, the narrative is beautiful in its simplicity. Amidst the simplicity of the story, the deep and unswerving commitment of Avraham is majestic. The story concludes with the ram, caught in the thicket by its horn; the shofar we use for Rosh Hashana.



#### ALIYA 1.

G-d tests Avraham: Take your beloved son and offer him as an offering. Avraham awakens early, gets up and goes with his assistants, with Yitzchak and with the wood.

The drama of the story is belied by the strikingly simple wording: Hineni, here I am, he woke up early, got up and went to do what G-d requested. The absence of any dialogue, of any questions, of challenge to G-d, of discussion with Sarah, of explanation to Yitzchak is noticeable.

This simplicity of language drives the message of the simplicity of Avraham's loyalty to G-d. For this terribly complex story is at its root quite simple. This simplicity is a Rosh Hashana theme. We live in a terribly complicated world; we have many unanswered questions, theological questions, many challenges and confusion.

But at some very deep and profound level we are simple in our devotion. Like the shofar – no words, just a simple call from way deep



in our souls.



#### ALIYA 2.

They arrive at the place. The assistants stay back. Avraham and Yitzchak walk, together. Yitzchak inquires as to where the offering is. Avraham responds that G-d will provide the offering. And they walk together.

They walk together. This togetherness is ironic – for Avraham knows he is to sacrifice Yitzchak, while Yitzchak does not. Or perhaps he does. Maybe he really is together with Avraham, perhaps he too is being tested. Yitzchak's test is his willingness to be sacrificed. And as the father of the Jewish people, he expresses the image of the Jew as a survivor; nearly destroyed, but surviving.



#### ALIYA 3.

Avraham builds the altar, arranges the wood, places Yitzchak on the altar and takes the knife to slaughter his son. The angel interrupts; instructing him not to slaughter his son, or do a thing, for now we know you would not withhold even your son from Me. Avraham sees the ram and offers it in place of his son. He calls the place “G-d will see, yireh” and it is called the mountain in which G-d is seen (Har Hamoriah).

What more can be said of this powerful and dramatic moment. The mountain is named.

He sees. And He is seen. The story told Him a lot about Avraham. He saw Avraham not just profess faith, but be faithful.

And the story tells us a lot about Him. What we see in Him is the mystery – why did He do this, and how little we know of His ways. But while his ways are inscrutable, His mercy and His faithfulness to us was clear to see. He saved Yitzchak and He saved Avraham from a treacherous moment.



#### ALIYA 4.

The angel calls to Avraham a second time. He is told that G-d swore that if Avraham did not withhold his child, that he and his children would be blessed, would be a blessing and would be a great people.

This too is a Rosh Hashana theme. Rosh Hashana is the birthday of the creation of mankind; made in the image of G-d. Majestic, creative, a partner to the Divine.

And the expression of blessing to the Jewish people is a further expression of the majesty of the Jewish people. Rosh Hashana is not only the majesty of G-d but the majesty of man. We are partners with the King. He reaches to us, creates us, chooses us, instructs us, blesses us. What a majestic mandate – the partners, the intimate partner of the King.



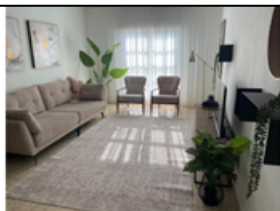
#### ALIYA 5.

Avraham is told that his brother has a full family of descendants including Rivka.

The next generation is now ready to pick up this great covenant and take its place in Jewish history. ■

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VAYEILECH

In memory of **Evelyn Rivers a"h**  
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### PARSHAT VAYEILECH

Parshat Vayeilech is just one chapter of 30 verses. It is the shortest parsha in the Torah.



#### 1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 31:1-3)

Moshe goes. And speaks to the entire people. I am 120 years old. I will not bring you into the Land; G-d will lead you. And Yehoshua will lead you.

After waxing eloquent, encouraging our total devotion to G-d and the need to invest our entire heart in love of Him, Moshe now turns to the practical matter at hand; the new leader.

No leader is indispensable. G-d leads. Yehoshua will take Moshe's place as leader but also as a partner to the Divine.

The parsha is called Vayeilech because of the first word. Moshe went. Where did he go? The Ibn Ezra said he went to each tribe to inform them that he would not be leading them, that he is about to die and to bless them.

Moshe is gracious in taking leave. He wants to convey to each tribe that he fully endorses Yehoshua. A leader, invested in the good of his people spends time and effort on a smooth transition. I have done what I have done. It is now time for Yehoshua to lead the next chapter.



#### 2ND ALIYA (31:4-6)

G-d will do for you as He did with Sichon and Og. Be strong and firm, do not be afraid or worried; G-d will be with

you. He will not let go of you or leave you.

The couplets are instructive. Moshe repeats the need to be strong, not to worry and that G-d will not abandon you. The doubling of expressions is Moshe's way of saying that this won't be easy. Don't think that the covenant with the Divine makes life a walk in the park. While He is with you, you need to be active participants in your own fate.



#### 3RD ALIYA (31:7-9)

Moshe called Yehoshua, and in front of the entire people charged him to be strong and of good courage. For G-d will be with you; He will not abandon you, so be not afraid. And Moshe wrote the Torah and gave it to the bearers of the Aron.

Moshe, while the humblest of all men, is fully aware that filling his shoes is daunting. Yehoshua must feel reticent. Unsure of himself. Inadequate. That is the healthy humility that every leader should display. Who am I to lead this great nation? And on top of that to follow Moshe.

Moshe addresses these fears. He encourages Yehoshua – be chazak, strong, and amatz, mighty. Don't be afraid. I served at a time that was right for me; you will serve as the right leader for your time.



#### 4TH ALIYA (31:10-13)

**Hakhelel:** Every 7 years, during Sukkot, when all Israel gathers, read this Torah, so all will learn to have awe and observe the Torah.

After encouraging Yehoshua, Moshe writes down the Torah and we learn the mitzvah of Hakhelel – public reading of the Torah every 7 years.

And although Hakhel is a meaningful mitzvah, its appearance here is curious. Moshe is transitioning. He is taking leave. Yehoshua is being invested. Why stick in the mitzvah of Hakhel, of reading and teaching the people to fear G-d?

Perhaps, and this is conjecture, the mitzvah of Hakhel is not as much to teach the people as it is to teach the King. The King is to read the Torah in front of the people.

Perhaps this is the Torah's version of the 7-year itch. Leaders, businesses, institutions often move in 7-year cycles. After 7 years, take stock. Where are you? Where are you going? Are you on track?

Moshe is instructing Yehoshua. You are to lead the people. To be a servant of G-d. Lots will happen as a leader that may make you overly confident, haughty, maybe fearful, pessimistic. Every 7 years, take the Torah and read it; take stock, publicly. Reboot in front of all the people. What a lesson by example. When they see you take stock and reassert that you are but a servant of the people and of G-d, they too will reboot to be servants of their people and their G-d.



#### 5TH ALIYA (31:14-19)

G-d calls Moshe and Yehoshua. A cloud appears. He says: these people will seek idols and abandon my covenant. I will leave them. I will hide my Face from them and they will feel I have abandoned them. I will surely Hide Myself from them. Write this song. Teach them this, so it shall be testimony for them.

This aliya turns rough. This is now not Moshe speaking, but G-d speaking to Moshe and Yehoshua. The Jews will rebel. And G-d will withdraw, Hiding His Face. Hiding His Face means that the unique protection He provides to the Jewish people will be removed. The Jews will be just like any other nation. He will leave the Jews subject to whatever calamities

befall them, just like any other nation. Nothing special.

The greatest theological mystery is contained in this one verse: "I will hide My Face from you." Chilling. And it is repeated: I will surely hide My Face. The greatest theological challenge, posed in our time by the unfathomable tragedy of the Holocaust, must grapple with this Divine eclipse – Hiding His Face. When and why does He Hide His Face? The Torah states it but does not explain it.

And while Jewish history is replete with tragedies, apparent moments of this Divine eclipse, at least in our time we are warmed by the opposite: we who have returned to His Land are warmed by the Shining of His Face upon us.



#### 6TH ALIYA (31:20-24)

I will bring the people to the Land, but they will respond to their success with rebellion. Let this song be at the ready for when this occurs. Moshe wrote the song, teaching it to the people. He charged Yehoshua again to be strong.

Moshe would again seem to be generous to Yehoshua. As if to say, "when things turn ugly, don't take the blame. All you can do is lead. Whether the people follow or whether they rebel is not of your doing. Be strong."

Generosity to the next leader, doing all to help them succeed is the sign of a leader. The leader who leads for his own ego would not want the next guy to be better than him. The sign of a true leader is when he works to ensure the success of his replacement, only wanting his success.



#### 7TH ALIYA (31:25-30)

Moshe commanded the Leviim to place the Torah on the side of the Aron, as a permanent testimony. For, I know this people and they are stubborn and cantankerous. Gather all the leaders so I can charge



them, for I am sure that following my death, there will be disloyalty. And Moshe spoke the words of the song to the people.

The song Moshe keeps referring to is Haazinu, the next parsha. History will have its share of surprises. But there will be sweeps of history that while tragic and full of suffering, need not be theological crises. At the dawn of our history, we are already expecting the unexpected, facing history with a sober sense of success and challenge.

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## HOSHEA 14:2-10, MICHA 7:18-20

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The Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is known as *Shabbat Shuva* or "Shabbat of Return (Repentance)." The name is a reference to the opening words of the week's *haftorah*, "*Shuva Israel* — Return O Israel."

The prophet Hoshea exhorts the Jewish people to "Return, O Israel, to the L-rd your G-d," encouraging them to repent sincerely and ask for Hashem's forgiveness. Hoshea urges the Jews to put their trust in G-d, not in Assyria, powerful horses or idols. At that point, Hashem promises to remove His anger from Israel, "I will be like dew to Israel, they shall blossom like a rose." The prophet then goes on to foretell the return of the exiles and the cessation of idol-worship amongst the people.

The *haftorah* concludes with a brief portion from the Book of Micha, which describes Hashem's kindness in forgiving the sins of His people. "He does not maintain His anger forever, for He is a lover of kindness. He will have mercy on us, He will grasp our iniquities and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Micha concludes with a plea to Hashem to remember the pacts He made with the Avot, Abraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. ■



## STATS

52<sup>nd</sup> of the 54 sedras; 9<sup>th</sup> of 11 Devarim.  
Written on 72 lines in a Torah (rank: 53).  
3 Parshiyot; 2 open, 1 closed.  
30 pesukim - ranks 54<sup>th</sup> (11<sup>th</sup> in Devarim).  
553 words - ranks 53<sup>rd</sup> (10<sup>th</sup> in Devarim).  
2123 letters - ranks 53<sup>rd</sup> (10<sup>th</sup> in Devarim).  
Shortest sedra in number of pesukim;  
longest pesukim in the whole Torah.



## MITZVOT

2 positive mitzvot.