



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

NITZAVIM-VAYELECH

The Torah ends with 4 very short parshiot. The last parsha of the Torah is read on Simchat Torah. After our double parsha, we have only the short parsha of Ha'azinu. So, we are virtually at the end of the Torah.

Let's frame our parsha in the context of the book of Devarim. Moshe has delivered a long speech, knowing he will not be with the people in their entry to the Land. Moshe has taken us from past, to present, to future. He began with the immediate fears and concerns of the people; how will we be successful in conquering the Land? He reviews the past; lessons to be learned, errors to be avoided, successes to remember. You will be successful. He then paints a picture of the society of ethical monotheism to be created in the Land. And the national institutions of legislature, judiciary and executive. He has gone from past, to immediate present, to the imminent future.

Then last week he pivoted to the distant future; the exile that will result inevitably from disloyalty. Though not yet in the Land, Moshe gives a chilling description of exile from the Land.

There are 2 themes to the terrible description of exile from the Land. First, warning. Stay loyal and this won't happen. The keeping of or disloyalty to mitzvot is high stakes.

However, there is a second theme. Interpreting history. It is this theme that occupies our parsha. How are we to interpret exile? Is

exile rejection? When we suffer so much, is that a rejection of the Jewish people by G-d? Can our covenant with Him lapse? Can we aggravate Him so much that He flings us from our Land, rejecting us forever? Can we be so bad that He Gives up on us? Can we look at history and say to ourselves, ok, looks like the covenant is over?

In addressing this theme, Moshe gazes way into the distant future. Before even entering the Land, Moshe is describing exile and in our parsha, return to the Land.

Although this double parsha has but 70 verses, the emotional impact is hard to match.



1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 29:9-28)

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

Moshe gathers all the people to enter the covenant.

Now, we have had covenants, brit, before.

A covenant was made with Avraham. And one made at Sinai. What then is being added here?

There are 2 parts to a covenant. What. And who. The what is clear; you are My people, I am your G-d. And hence, when you are disloyal, I respond even to the point of exile from the Land.

And the who? All of you; everyone is in. Not only you here today, but all future generations too.

And that is the implied point here. When you look at your fate, scattered around the globe and look at the desolation of the Land of Israel, the Land flowing with milk and honey and now desolate, you will think the worst. This is not just that our partner in the covenant is upset. Maybe the covenant is void. We are scattered out of the Land forever. The Land is desolate forever. You can violate the terms of a covenant so egregiously that the whole deal is off.

No, no. The covenant is with everyone, endures for eternity. There is no sunset clause. Do not, please, try to interpret your suffering as the end of the covenant.



2ND 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.

There is no sunset clause to the covenant; after the horrible suffering of exile, you will return.

This parshah, call Parshat HaTeshuva, is stunning. Moshe, on the banks of the Jordan, before entering the Land, describes exile from

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the Land in the distant future. And the return to it.

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”. Return, teshuva begins modestly, quietly, heart murmurings. He knows our murmurings, as faint as they may be. Once He senses those murmurings, He empowers us, Gives us the strength, the will to build on our deepest pining. He is there, waiting for us to take the first step. Then He gives us more strength and more. Just allow the heart to murmur.



3RD ALIYA (30:7-14)

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. 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.

Moshe uses words of affection. Love, love of Hashem. Heart, all your heart. 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*. Shake off your inhibitions. 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 his deepest feelings and to reach our deepest emotions.



4TH ALIYA (30:15-31:6)

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. 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. 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.

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.



5TH ALIYA (31:7-13)

Moshe called Yehoshua, and in front of the entire people charged him: 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.

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

The transition begins. Moshe encourages Yehoshua a lot – be chazak, strong, and amatz, mighty. Don't be afraid. Moshe is addressing the unspoken fears of both the people and Yehoshua. For although there is a promise to the Jewish people, who knows if I, Yehoshua, am deserving to be their leader. Maybe I am unworthy. That is the healthy humility that every leader should display. Who am I to lead this great nation?

Moshe conveys a crucial message. The covenant transcends any one person. Sure, I, Moshe implies, lived a unique life, speaking directly with G-d. But the covenant is greater than me. No one person is indispensable. You will be fine.



6TH ALIYA (31:14-19)

G-d calls Moshe and Yehoshua. A cloud appears. G-d says: this 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 Hashem will withdraw, will leave the Jews subject to whatever calamities befall them. 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, 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.



7TH ALIYA (31:20-30)

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 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.

This preamble to the song of Haazinu emphasizes again the inevitable rebelliousness of the people but it offers a remedy. A song. The song does not prevent the rebelliousness. It is to address the unspoken response to the suffering that results, the feeling of abandonment, the concern that the covenant is over, is broken.

For that we need poetry, the song of Haazinu. As the verse said at the beginning of the parsha, the hidden things are for Him. Our covenant is eternal. When we suffer, for how long, how to view our history – we will never be privy to knowing His Ways.

HAFTORAH YESHAYAHU 61:10 - 63:9

This week's *haftorah* is the seventh and final installment of a series of seven "*Haftarot* of Consolation." The prophet begins on a high note, describing the great joy that we will experience with the Final Redemption, comparing it to the joy of a newly married couple.

Yeshayahu then declares his refusal to passively await the Redemption: "For Zion's sake I will not remain silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be still, until her righteousness emerges like shining light..." He implores the stones of Yerushalayim not to be silent, day or night, until G-d restores Jerusalem and establishes it in glory.

The Haftorah then recounts Hashem's oath to eventually redeem Zion, when the Jews will praise G-d in Yerushalayim. The haftorah also contains a description of the punishment Hashem will mete out to Edom and the enemies of Israel.

Yeshayahu concludes with the famous statement:

"In all [Israel's] afflictions, He, too, is afflicted, and the angel of His presence redeemed them..."

Like a loving father who shares the pain of his child, G-d, too, shares the pain of His people, and awaits Redemption along with them. ■

**May the Torah learned
from this issue of Torah Tidbits
be in loving memory of**

רבקה בת יוסף ע"ה

Rifka Edelstein a"h

**beloved wife, mother, grandmother
and great grandmother
on her 17th yearzeit - 25 Elul**

***The Rosner, Edelstein,
Sokoloff families***