

Nitzavim

THE WEISS EDITION

Light points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints

לזיכרון ולעילוי נשמת

הרה"ח הרה"ת

הר"ר ישעיהו זושא

ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם

נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט ה'תשפ"ב

תנצב"ה



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נצבים

Nitzavim

כט:ט-יא | 29:9-11

אַתֶּם נִצָּבִים הַיּוֹם בְּלִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם רָאשֵׁיכֶם
שְׂבֵטֵיכֶם וְקִנְיֵיכֶם וְשֹׁטְרֵיכֶם כָּל אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל: טַפְּכֶם
נְשֵׁיכֶם וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶרֶב מַחֲנֶיךָ מִחַטָּב עַד
שֹׂאב מִיָּמֶיךָ: לְעִבְרְךָ בְּבֵרִית ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ...

You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d: the leaders of your tribes, your elders and your officers, every man of Israel; your young children, your women, and your convert who is within your camp, your woodcutters and your water-drawers, so that you may enter the covenant of Hashem your G-d.

Solid Backing

The purpose of this covenant was to enlist every Jew as a guarantor that his fellow Jews will observe the Torah.¹ As our Sages taught, “All of Israel are guarantors for one another,”²

1. See Ohr Hachaim, Devarim 29:9; see also Rashi, ibid. 29:28.

2. Shevuos 39a.

meaning that every Jew bears personal responsibility for his fellow.

A guarantor is presumably in a better position than the person he is backing, which is what makes him more dependable than the person behind whose commitment he stands. For example, a wealthy person could serve as a guarantor for a poor person's loan, but not vice versa. Hence, if "all of Israel are guarantors for one another," it is evident that each and every Jew, from "the leaders of your tribes" down to "your water-drawers," has a unique strength that qualifies him as a guarantor for the others.

This can be understood in light of the Alter Rebbe's teaching that the Jewish nation is "one complete figure," comparable to a human body, in which every limb and organ completes and complements the other.³ The head and brain are ostensibly "superior" to the other parts of the body, yet the legs support and give mobility to the entire body, including the head. Similarly, every single Jew has a quality with which he, and only he, can serve as the guarantor for the rest of the Jewish nation, due to his extraordinary strength in that particular area.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 4, pp. 1140–1141

3. Likkutei Torah, Nitzavim 44a.

 כט:ט-יא | 29:9-11

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אלקיכם ראשיכם
 שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם כל איש ישראל: טפכם
 נשיכם וגרך אשר בקרב מחניך מחטב עציך עד
 שאב מימך: לעברך בברית ה' אלקיך...

You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem your G-d: the leaders of your tribes, your elders and your officers, every man of Israel; your young children, your women, and your convert who is within your camp, your woodcutters and your water-drawers, so that you may enter the covenant of Hashem your G-d.

The Pact

Every year we read Parshas Nitzavim on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. Implied is that Parshas Nitzavim addresses the themes of Rosh Hashanah, and reading it enables us to experience the holiday properly.

In the first verses we read that the entire Jewish nation assembled to enter a covenant with G-d. The Torah mentions specifically that from the leaders to the water-drawers, all of Israel stood united as one—"all of you."

What is the purpose of a covenant? If two friends are concerned that their relationship might sour at some point, they may enter into a covenant—a pact to remain loyal to each other forever, even if future events or discoveries about one another cause them to lose favor in each other's eyes.

This, essentially, is the theme of Rosh Hashanah: a renewal of the covenant between G-d and the Jewish people. On Rosh Hashanah, when our love for G-d is strong (after our heartfelt

teshuvah during the month of Elul), we commit ourselves to G-d unconditionally. We pray that G-d will enter this covenant with us, committing Himself to us unconditionally, even if later in the year our love may not be as obvious.

The covenant of Rosh Hashanah requires, however, that all members of the Jewish nation unite as one, just as the Jewish people did—men, women and children, from the elders to the converts—in Parshas Nitzavim. For in order to evoke G-d's unconditional commitment to us, we too must behave in a manner that transcends any reason or conditions. We do this by showing our sincere love and respect for *all* our fellow Jews, despite our understandable differences.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 2, pp. 399–400

כט: יג-יד | 29:13-14

וְלֹא אִתְּכֶם לְבִדְכֶם אֲנִי פֹרֵת אֶת הַבְּרִית הַזֹּאת וְאֶת
הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֹּאת: כִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר יֵשְׁנוּ פֹה עִמָּנוּ עַד הַיּוֹם
לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר אֵינָנו פֹּה עִמָּנוּ הַיּוֹם

*But not only with you am I making this covenant and
this oath, but with those standing here with us today
before Hashem our G-d, and with those who are not here
with us, this day.*

What Makes You Jewish Today?

The entire Jewish nation assembled to enter into a covenant with G-d. Moshe addressed them, explaining that this covenant was not only with the Jews of that generation who were all present, but also “with those standing here with us today before Hashem our G-d, and with those who are not here with us this day.” Meaning, in the words of Rashi, “Even with future generations.”

Various commentaries discuss how the covenant could be binding upon people who were not yet born (and even future converts to Judaism).⁴ Some explain that the souls of the future generations were present when the covenant was made, even though their bodies were not. Others explain that since a child is the continuation of his parents,⁵ the future generations were contained within those present at that covenant, and thereby automatically included.

Rashi, however, offers neither of these explanations, nor any other, implying that these rationalizations are unneces-

4. See Talmud, Shevuos 39a.

5. In the terminology of the Talmudists, “A child is the leg of his father.”

sary. Ostensibly, Rashi is of the opinion that since G-d is not bound by the natural limits of time, He can enter a covenant with people of the future *directly*, just as He can with people of the present.

Support for this is found in the words of the verse: "...those standing with us here today... and with those who are not here with us." Having stated earlier (29:11) that everyone present was entering the covenant, why was it necessary to repeat that the covenant encompassed "those standing with us here today"? Evidently, the Torah wishes to equate G-d's covenant with the Jews of future generations ("who are not here with us") and His covenant with those present ("those standing with us here today"), emphasizing that they are identical.

Rashi therefore insists that the Jews of future generations enter this covenant not merely by virtue of their ancestors' presence, nor is the covenant merely with their souls (in contrast with those who were physically present at the time, whose bodies, too, entered in the covenant). Rather, every Jew for all eternity, body and soul, born Jew and convert alike, is a direct and equal partner in this covenant with G-d.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 19, pp. 266–271

 ל:א-ב | 2:1-30

וְהָיָה כִּי יָבֹאוּ עָלֶיךָ כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה...
וְשָׁבַת עַד ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלוֹ

*It will be, when all these things come upon you... and
you will return to Hashem your G-d, and you will listen
to His voice.*

Can Teshuvah Be an Obligation?

The Sefer Mitzvos Katan interprets this verse as a commandment to do *teshuvah*, meaning that a person who has sinned is obligated to repent, and has neglected to fulfill a mitzvah if he does not.⁶ Others, however, read this verse as foretelling that the Jewish people will ultimately repent, but not necessarily as a commandment to do so. Indeed, according to some opinions, repentance is not an obligation of its own; it is only the means (along with the verbal confession) by which a person can atone for his sins if he so desires.⁷

This debate reflects two aspects of *teshuvah* as explained in the teachings of Chassidus. According to Chassidus, the soul comprises 613 spiritual “limbs” or faculties, each corresponding to a particular mitzvah,⁸ and a deficiency in the fulfillment of a mitzvah causes a deficiency in the corresponding limb in one’s soul.⁹

Teshuvah, however, has the ability to repair those “limbs” of the soul that have been damaged. This is because the profound

6. Mitzvah 53.

7. See Minchas Chinuch, mitzvah 364.

8. Tanya, chapter 4.

9. Likkutei Torah, Nitzavim 45c.

desire to reconnect with G-d draws from the very essence of the soul—the source from which the individual “limbs” of the soul extend. *Teshuvah* thus draws new life into all the “limbs,” restoring them to their proper “health.”

This explains the opinion that *teshuvah* is not one of the commandments. Feelings that stem from the depths of your heart, expressing the essence of your soul, must come from within; when you act out of duty, you are not expressing your most natural self. Therefore the Torah does not command you to repent, since only when *teshuvah* is motivated by your own free choice is it clear that it stems from the purest essence of the soul.

Nevertheless, the prevalent opinion is that *teshuvah* is in fact a mitzvah,¹⁰ for the goal of *teshuvah* is not only feelings of regret and a burning desire to return to G-d, but the practical observance of His mitzvos that these feelings will engender in the future. As such, although *teshuvah* must stem from within and not be motivated by duty alone, it is still a mitzvah like all the others, in order to remind you of its objective—to invigorate your actual fulfillment of the mitzvos, your obligations toward G-d.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 38, pp. 18–25

10. See Tanya, Iggeres Hateshuvah, chapter 1.

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הרה"ת מרדכי יוסף שמעון
ב"ר ירחמיאל מנחם ע"ה
בערגער
נלב"ע כ"ז אלול ה'תשע"ג
תנצב"ה



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ולעילוי נשמת
זוגתו יאכא רייזל בת ר' דוד ע"ה
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לו

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בת הרה"ת חיים שניאור זלמן
וזוגתו מרת חנה רבקה שיחיו
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