

# חומש דברים

# THE TORAH

*With an Interpolated English Translation  
and Commentary Based on the Works of*

***The Lubavitcher Rebbe***

***Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson***

וצוקללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע

**Chumash Devarim**

*The Book of Deuteronomy*

***Parshat Vayeilech***



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**THE TORAH - CHUMASH DEVARIM**

WITH AN INTERPOLATED ENGLISH TRANSLATION  
AND COMMENTARY BASED ON THE WORKS OF  
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

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# 52 ויילך Vayeilech

## Overview

*Parashat Vayeilech* continues the record of Moses' address to the Jewish people on the last day of his life. In this *parashah*, Moses instates Joshua as his successor, finishes committing the Torah to writing, relates to the people the commandment to assemble every seven years to renew their covenant with God, and prepares them for receiving "the poem of witness" that will constitute the next *parashah*, *Ha'azinu*.

As we pointed out in the overview to *parashat Nitzavim*, the two *parashiot* of *Nitzavim* and *Vayeilech* are in most years read together in the public reading of the Torah, this fact supporting the view that they actually one *parashah*, which is only occasionally split into two. Together they contain the essential features of the covenantal relationship between God and the Jewish people: *parashat Nitzavim* focuses on God's side of the covenant, while *parashat Vayeilech* focuses on the Jewish people's side of the covenant. Furthermore, this difference in focus is reflected in the names of the *parashiot*, for the word *Nitzavim* means "standing firm," referring to God's immutable essence, whereas the word *Vayeilech* means "and he walked," referring to our never-ending journey of spiritual refinement.

In particular, however, *Nitzavim* and *Vayeilech* allude to the two complementary aspects of our own spiritual lives. We all have to learn how to stand firm vis-à-vis those aspects of our spiritual life that require uncompromising resolution as well as how to constantly progress vis-à-vis those aspects of our spiritual lives that require continuous change, growth, and development.

This dichotomy is evident in the Torah itself: whereas the Written Torah is a fixed, unchanging text, the Oral Torah is an ever-expanding, dynamic corpus of explanation of the Written Torah and its application to the ever-changing specificities of each generation. Even the Oral Torah itself exhibits this dichotomy, inasmuch as its constantly broadening expanse of new insights can develop only within the Torah's own fixed guidelines that govern the derivation of such insights. This is how we understand the sages' statement that "any new insight that a veteran student will ever derive has already been given to Moses at Sinai."<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the spiritual exercise of prayer exhibits both sides of this dichotomy. The obligation to pray a specific number of times every day, or in specific contexts, as well as the text of our prayers—the liturgy—is fixed. On the other hand, prayer is "the service of

1. *Megilah* 19b; *Y. Peah* 2:4; *Shemot Rabbah* 47:1; *Vayikra Rabbah* 22:1; sources cited in *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, p. 252, notes 20 & 21.

heart”<sup>2</sup> and is therefore dynamic, inasmuch as the scope and intensity of our emotions are constantly changing and hopefully maturing.

Finally, religious practice—the performance of God’s commandments—also reflects this dichotomy. The number of commandments is fixed at 613, but it is always possible to improve our performance of them, both physically and spiritually, by performing them more meticulously and thoughtfully, respectively.

Thus, all three divisions of our relationship with God<sup>3</sup>—the study of the Torah, prayer, and the performance of the commandments—evinces this complementary dichotomy is evident. The presence of this dichotomy in all aspects of our religious life keeps us mindful of the twin foundations of Judaism: its fixed, unchanging aspects are God speaking to us; its constantly changing and developing aspects are us responding to God.<sup>4</sup>



The dichotomy alluded to in the names of the twin *parashiot* of *Nitzavim* and *Vayeilech*—in addition to reflecting the two sides of Jewish observance—also expresses the opposite poles of attitude we must cultivate in order to be able to live vibrant, full spiritual lives.

On the one hand, we need to cultivate resoluteness in our commitment to fulfilling God’s will, never allowing ourselves to be swayed by social comment from without or misgivings from within. On the other hand, we must cultivate the flexibility and agility necessary to remain open to new and higher insights.

Thus, the sages teach us, “Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, fast as a deer, and strong as a lion, to do the will of your Father in heaven.”<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, we are enjoined to be “bold as a leopard” and “strong as a lion” in our steadfast, unshakable commitment; on the other hand, we are enjoined to be “light as an eagle” and “fast as a deer” to fly and run quickly and nimbly from one level of Divine consciousness to the next, higher one. It is not by accident that this statement is quoted at the very beginning of the *Shulchan Aruch*, the Code of Jewish Law, which governs the daily life of every Jew.

Normally, it is hard to imagine how we can manifest both attitudes simultaneously. And indeed, *Nitzavim* and *Vayeilech* are in some years read separately, in order to reflect the phenomenon that we are not always capable of living both sides of this coin at once. But as we mature in our ongoing process of self-refinement, increasingly binding ourselves to God, who transcends all dichotomies and paradoxes, we can learn how to live both sides of this paradox at once; this is reflected in the majority of years, in which *Nitzavim* and *Vayeilech* are read together.

Nowhere is the complementary nature of these two poles of religious life so apparent as it is in our relationship with the world at large. When, as is required of us, we venture out of the spiritual safety of Torah study, prayer, and personal performance of the commandments in order to refine the world and disseminate Divine consciousness, our ability to successfully “walk” (*Vayeilech*) in the possibly antagonistic world is directly dependent on how firmly we are rooted (*Nitzavim*) in the spiritual home from which we have ventured.<sup>6</sup>



It is instructive that the Torah describes our side of our covenant with God by means

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2. See 11:13, above.

3. *Avot* 1:2.

4. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 29, pp. 173-178.

5. *Avot* 5:20.

6. *Sichot Kodesh* 5740, vol. 3, pp. 1086-1095.

of the idiom of walking. Although walking is a steady, measured form of progress (as opposed to running or jumping, for example), at the same time it distances us totally from our point of origin (as opposed to standing up or growing, for example). Thus, in employing the metaphor of walking, the Torah is teaching us that our relationship with God should be characterized by progress so radical that each new step lands us in a totally different place, that our infinite “return” to Him should continually make us into new people, individuals who have left their former selves far behind.

In the overall context of the Book of Deuteronomy, which, as we have seen, is the book of *teshuvah*—return to God, *parashat Vayeilech* thus instructs us how to make *teshuvah* into a truly transformative experience. This is perhaps why the account of the Torah’s completion<sup>7</sup> is found specifically in *parashat Vayeilech*, even though we would have expected this account to appear chronologically at the very end of the last *parashah* of the Torah. In order to progress to a new level of Divine consciousness, to a new level of understanding the Torah, we must first “finish the Torah” at our present level of consciousness. We are similarly taught<sup>8</sup> that in the afterlife, in order for the soul to progress from one level of Divine consciousness to the next, it must first purge itself of the Divine consciousness it has achieved thus far, and similarly when it progresses from its newfound Divine consciousness to its next awaiting level.

This process is ongoing, and will continue until—and even after—we reach the ultimate goal of *teshuvah*, the restoration of the world as God’s ultimate home, with the advent of the messianic era and the final Redemption.<sup>9</sup>

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7. 31:9.

8. *Torah Or* 69c; *Likutei Torah* 1:1d, etc.

9. *Sefer HaSichot* 5749, vol. 1, pp. 5-7.

## ONKELOS

31:1 וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל־כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל: 2 וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם בֶּן־מֶאֱחָ וְעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה אָנֹכִי הַיּוֹם לֹא־אוֹכֵל עוֹד לִצְאָת וּלְבֹאֹ וַיְהִי הָאָמֶר אֵלָּי לֹא תַעֲבֹר אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן הַזֶּה: 3 יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא | עֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ הוּא־יִשְׁמָד אֶת־הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה מִלְּפָנֶיךָ וַיִּרְשָׁתָם יְהוֹשֻׁעַ הוּא עֹבֵר לְפָנֶיךָ כְּאִשֶּׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה:

שני 4 וְעִשָּׂה יְהוָה לָהֶם כְּאִשֶּׁר עָשָׂה לְסִיחֹן וּלְעֹוג מִלְכֵי הָאֱמֹרִי וּלְאַרְצָם אֲשֶׁר הִשְׁמִיד אֹתָם: 5 וּנְתַנָּם יְהוָה לְפָנֶיכֶם וְעִשִּׂיתֶם לָהֶם כְּכָל־הַמִּצְוָה אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אֶתְכֶם: 6 חֲזֹקוּ וְאַמְצוּ אֶל־תִּירְאוֹ וְאַל־תַּעֲרָצוּ מִפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הַחֲלֹק עִמָּךְ לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ וְלֹא יַעֲזֹבְךָ: 8

## RASHI

ליהושע. דבר אחר: "לצאת ולבוא" — בדברי תורה, מלמד שנסתתמו ממנו מסורות ומענינות החקמה: וה' אומר אלי. זהו פרוש "לא אוכל עוד לצאת ולבוא", לפי שזה' אומר אלי: 6 לא ירפך. לא יתן לך רפיון להיות נעזב ממנו:

2-1 וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וְגו' אָנֹכִי הַיּוֹם. היום מלאו ימי ושנותי, ביום זה נולדתי וביום זה אמות: לא אוכל עוד לצאת ולבוא. יכול שתשש כחו, תלמוד לומר: "לא כהתה עינו ולא נס לחה", אלא מהו "לא אוכל"? — איני רשאי, שנטלה ממני הרשות ונתנה

1. דברים לד, 1.

## CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

this perspective, it is only natural that a righteous person's spiritual perfection be mirrored in at least some sort of physical perfection. The fact that at his death, it is revealed that all his years were complete reflects the truth that his life work in general was complete—that his service of God affected every last iota of his life, in both time and space. We have seen the high regard that the Torah accords this fullness in living with regard to Abraham.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the fact that a righteous person's physical life so perfectly mirrors his spiritual life indicates that he has successfully overcome the dichotomy between the spiritual and the material: there is no artificial bifurcation of life into physical and spiritual realms; it is all one.

The reason this unity of the spiritual and the physical is expressed chiefly with regard to the years of a person's life is because the year is the unit of time that encompasses the full cycle of change, as primarily evidenced by the annual repetition of the seasons. Indeed, the very word for "year" in Hebrew (שנה) is related to the words for "change"

(שנון) and "repetition" (שינוי).

In this context, those righteous individuals whose years were complete, although exceptional, serve to express a truth that applies to all righteous people. The fact that most people—even the very righteous—do not die on their birthdays can simply mean that they either finished their tasks early or that they were given extra time after having finished their tasks in order to accomplish some additional purpose. Nonetheless, when righteous individuals do reflect this perfection openly by dying on their birthdays, it indicates that they did embody the ideals mentioned above in a particularly manifest way throughout their lives.

In any case, the lives of these righteous individuals should inspire us to live our own lives to the fullest, the consciousness of our Divine mission permeating every minute and every item in our lives, thereby dissolving the artificial dichotomy of the spiritual and the physical and revealing the innate Divinity underlying all reality.<sup>8</sup>

7. Genesis 24:1. 8. *Sefer HaSichot* 5752, vol. 1, pp. 134-137.



## The Succession of Joshua

31:1 On that same day,<sup>1</sup> **Moses went and spoke the following words to all Israel.**

**2 He said to them,** “A further reason I have assembled you today is in order to encourage you to accept Joshua as your leader, inasmuch as today he will succeed me in this capacity and I am entrusting you to his charge.<sup>2</sup>

**Today I am exactly 120 years old,** for today is my birthday. Today, too, I will complete my purpose on earth, and will therefore die. The proof that I have almost completed my mission on earth is that, although I have not lost any of my physical capabilities on account of old age,<sup>3</sup> **I am nevertheless longer allowed by God to come and go** before you (i.e., lead you), for **God said to me, ‘You will not cross this Jordan River,’** which indicates that He is about to transfer the leadership from me to Joshua.<sup>4</sup> Further proof that my tenure as your leader has come to an end is the fact that **I can no longer go and come** freely, as I used to, in discoursing upon the Torah, for I am no longer able to articulate the teachings that God transmitted to me orally and which are not alluded to in the Written Torah, nor am I able to articulate my own insights. All I can articulate is whatever remains for me to transmit of the Written Torah, together with its explanation.<sup>5</sup>

**3 But do not fear:** even though I will not accompany you into the Promised Land, **God, your God—He will still cross the river ahead of you; He will destroy these nations from before you and you will dispossess them.** God will accompany you via your new leader, **Joshua; he will cross the river ahead of you, as God has spoken.**

◆ **Second Reading 4 God will do to them**—Joshua’s opponents—as **He did to my opponents, the Amorite kings, Sichon and Og, and to the people of their land, all of whom He destroyed.**

**5 When God delivers them before you, you must do to them in accordance with all the commandments that I have commanded you concerning them.**

**6 Be strong and courageous! Neither fear, nor be discouraged because of them, for God, your God—He is the one who goes with you. He will neither fail you nor forsake you.”**

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### ∞ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ∞

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**2 Today I am exactly 120 years old:** The fact that Moses died on his birthday indicates that the years of his life were all full; even his last year of life was not left unfinished. The sages teach us that this means that Moses lived his life to its fullest, not wasting any time or leaving undone any part of the task with which he was charged. This, they say, is the hallmark of a truly righteous person. According to tradition, the three patriarchs also died on the day or in the month of their respective births.<sup>6</sup>

It is true, of course, that none of us can compare with Moses or the patriarchs; nonetheless, our peo-

ple have been blessed with many righteous individuals throughout the course of our history, and only a select few have passed away on their birthdays. Indeed, since righteous people devote their lives entirely to spirituality, to fulfilling their Divine mission, what is so significant about the fact that they complete their years perfectly?

The answer is that while it is true that our lives are meant to be oriented toward Divinity, which transcends the externalities of time and space, we are nonetheless intended to bring this transcendent consciousness into the physical world. From

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1. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, p. 260. 2. Rashi on 29:12, above; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, p. 263. 3. As is stated in 34:7, below. 4. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 29, p. 82, pp. 197-198. 5. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 29, pp. 189-193; *Sichot Kodesh* 5740, vol. 3, pp. 1088-1089. 6. *Rosh HaShanah* 11a.

— ONKELOS —

7 וקרא משה ליהושע ואמר לה לעיני כל ישראל תקף ואליהם ארי את תעול עם עמא הדין לארעא די קיים יי לאבהתהון למתן להון ואת תחסננה יתהון: 8 ויזי הוא דמדבר קדמך מימרה יהי בסעדך לא ישבקך ולא ירחקך לא תרחל ולא תתגר: 9 וכתב משה ית אורייתא הדיא ויהבה לכהניא בני לוי דנטלין ית ארון קמא דיין ולכל סבי ישראל: 10 ופקיד משה יתהון למימור מסוף שבע שנין בזמן שתא דשמטתא בחגא דמטליא:

◆ שלישי (חמישי במחזורין) 7 ויקרא משה ליהושע ויאמר אליו לעיני כל ישראל חזק ואמץ כי אתה תבוא את העם הזה אליהם אשר נשבע יהוה לאבותם לתת להם ואתה תנחילנה אותם: 8 ויהוה הוא | ההלך לפניך הוא יהיה עמך לא ירפך ולא יעזבך לא תירא ולא תחת: 9 וכתב משה את התורה הזאת ויתנה אל הכהנים בני לוי הנשאים את ארון ברית יהוה ואל כל זקני ישראל:

◆ רביעי 10 ויצו משה אותם לאמר מקץ | שבע שנים במעד שנת השמטה בחג הסכות:

— RASHI —

לדור, ולא שני דברים לדור: 9 וכתב משה וגו' ויתנה. כשנגמרה כלה, נתנה לבני שבטו: 10 מקץ שבע שנים. בשנה ראשונה של שמטה, בשמינית. ולמה קורא אותה "שנת השמטה"? שעדין שביעית נוקטת בה, בקציר של שביעית היוצא למוצאי שביעית:

7 כי אתה תבוא את העם הזה. "ארי את תיעול עם עמא הדין". משה אמר לו ליהושע: זקנים שבדור יהיו עמך, הכל לפי דעתן ועצתן. אבל הקדוש ברוך הוא אמר ליהושע: "כי אתה תביא את בני ישראל אל הארץ אשר נשבעתי להם", תביא על כרחם, הכל תלוי בך — טל מקל וחר על קדקדן; דבר אחד

## The Septennial Assembly

- ◆ *Fourth Reading* 10 Then Moses commanded the people, saying, "In connection with my previous exhortations to Joshua,<sup>15</sup> I will now further command him to periodically exhort you collectively, in a public ceremony, regarding the study of the Torah in particular and the fulfillment of its commandments in general.<sup>16</sup> As you know, God has commanded you to observe the sabbatical year every seven years<sup>17</sup> in order that you break from earning your livelihood and devote yourselves exclusively to spiritual rejuvenation, principally through the study of the Torah. It is important to carry the inspiration of this year into the ensuing six years. Therefore, you must perform the following ceremony **at the end of every seven years**, i.e., **at an appointed time** during the first year of the next septennial cycle, which, because some of the laws of resting from agricultural work still apply during it, making you therefore still at least partially free from earning a livelihood, can also be considered **the year of release**.<sup>18</sup>

Specifically, **on** the night following the first day of **the Festival of Sukot**,

15. Above, vv. 7-8. 16. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 34, pp. 188-189. 17. Exodus 23:10-12; Leviticus 25:1-7, 20-24; above, 15:1-11. 18. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, pp. 197-201.

◆ *Third Reading (Fifth when combined)* 7 Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous! Do not be daunted by the difficulties in governing the people, **for you must come together with this entire people**—including their elders—**into the land that God swore to their forefathers to give them**. The elders will assist you in running internal affairs, just as they have assisted me; consult with them and follow their advice. However, with regard to conquering the land, you must lead the people by yourself, as I previously requested and to which God agreed;<sup>9</sup> and **you must apportion it to the people by yourself as an inheritance**, without consulting the elders, for in wartime there can be only one leader.<sup>10</sup>

8 And furthermore, what I just told the people applies especially to you: **God—He is the one who goes before you. He will be with you. He will neither fail you nor forsake you. Do not fear and do not be daunted.**”

### The Torah Scroll

9 Later that day, after finishing his final address, Moses miraculously wrote down this entire, complete Torah, including the account of his own death and burial, and gave it to the priests as the representatives of the Levites, who carried the Ark of the Covenant of God, for since they would be exempt from working the land in order to be free to both officiate in the Temple and teach the Torah to the people, it was appropriate that the Torah scroll be given to them.

But when Moses did this, the rest of the people complained that since they too had been given the Torah on Mount Sinai, they should be on equal footing with the tribe of Levi, and that giving the one copy of the Torah scroll only to the Levites would enable them to claim later—when only they would be able to study it constantly—that it was given only to them to study, and that the rest of the people were merely obligated to follow its instructions. When Moses heard these complaints, he was pleased, because he had previously told the people that they must learn to appreciate God’s kindnesses so intensely that they be inspired to cling to Him out of love, and these complaints demonstrated that they indeed desired to cling to Him. Moses expressed his approval using the same words he had used earlier that day: “Until this day, God did not give you a heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear.”<sup>11</sup>

Moses therefore wrote twelve additional copies of the Torah,<sup>12</sup> which he gave to all the elders of Israel as representatives of their respective tribes.<sup>13</sup>

(From another perspective, as will be seen later,<sup>14</sup> God dictated the final eight verses of the Torah to Joshua after Moses’ death; Joshua thus completed these 13 original copies of the Torah scroll.)

9. Numbers 27:15-23. 10. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, pp. 307-314. 11. Above, 29:3; Rashi *ad loc.*; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, pp. 102-103, vol. 19, p. 260. 12. *Pesikta d’Rav Kahana* 32; *Devarim Rabbah* 9:9; *Midrash Tehilim* 90:3; *Mishneh Torah*, introduction; *Beit Elokim, Sha’ar HaYesodot* 5. 13. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, pp. 315-317. 14. Below, 33:29.

## ONKELOS

11 במיתא כל ישראל לאתחזא  
קדם יי אלהיך באתרא די יתריעי  
תקרי ית אורייתא הקדא קדם כל  
ישראל ותשמענו: 12 כגוש ית  
עמא גבריא ונשיא וטפלא וגיוך  
די בקרויך בדיל דישמעון ובדיל  
דילפון וידחלון מקדם יי אלהכון  
ויטרון למעבד ית כל פתגמי  
אורייתא הקדא:

11 בְּבוֹא כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל לִרְאוֹת אֶת-פְּנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ  
בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר תִּקְרָא אֶת-הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת נֶגֶד כָּל-  
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם: 12 הִקְהֵל אֶת-הָעָם הָאֲנָשִׁים וְהַנְּשִׁים  
וְהַטָּף וְהַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֶיךָ לְמַעַן יִשְׁמְעוּ וּלְמַעַן יִלְמְדוּ  
וִירְאוּ אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וַשְׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-דְּבַר  
הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת:

## RASHI

ללמוד: והנשים. לשמע: והטף. למה באז? לתת שִׁכָּר  
למביאייהם:

11 תִּקְרָא אֶת הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת. הַמִּלֵּךְ הָיָה קוֹרֵא  
מִתְחַלֵּת "אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים", בְּדִאיִתָּא בְּמַסְכַּת סוּטָה,  
עַל בִּימָה שֶׁל עַץ שֶׁהָיוּ עוֹשִׂין בַּעֲזָרָה: 12 הָאֲנָשִׁים.

4. מ, נ.

## CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

**12 Assemble the people:** As long as the Temple is not standing, it is not possible to fulfill this commandment as described in the Torah. Of course, we can fulfill it in any number of allegorical ways, some of which are outlined here. In general, fulfilling any of the Torah's commandments involves our faculties of thought, speech, and deed; when it is not possible to fulfill a commandment in deed, we should still try to fulfill it in thought (e.g. by learning the laws regarding how to observe the commandment, internalizing the lessons inherent in it, etc.) and in speech (by reciting the passages of the Torah describing the commandment, taking care to learn its laws out loud, etc.).

With regard to most of the Torah's commandments, the physical execution of the commandment has its own value, independent of any intentions associated with it. Although immeasurably enhanced when performed with the associated intentions in mind, it nonetheless stands on its own.

The commandment of the septennial assembly, however, differs from most of the Torah's other commandments in that the intention behind it is not a mere result or by-product of its performance, but an integral component of its performance. This difference is evident in how the Torah describes at length the intention behind the assembly: "in order that they hear...in order that they learn...in order that they revere...and safeguard, etc."

Thus, when we fulfill the intention behind this commandment, even nowadays, we are not only fulfilling its thought- and/or speech-dimensions, but at least part of its deed-dimension, as well. In this way, the septennial assembly is similar to prayer: Prayer is also performed in all three dimensions—thought,

speech, and action—but its thought-dimension is an integral component of it. Mouthing the words of prayer and going through the motions without paying attention to what we are saying is not true prayer.

Since the objective of the septennial assembly is to strengthen the foundations of Jewish education and observance, and since, as stated, we can indeed fulfill it nowadays (albeit not yet in exactly the same form as described ideally in the Torah), it is vital that we all try to do so to the greatest extent possible. To begin with, we should all endeavor to "assemble" all the divergent facets of our personalities and imbue them with the knowledge and reverence of God.<sup>30</sup> Next, we should assemble our families periodically and, in a spirit of family love and camaraderie, strengthen each other in these areas. Finally, we should try to assemble whatever groups of people we can, whether at work, at school, in our synagogues, our extended families, our wider circle of friends, etc., in short, in whatever social context we can, and thus influence as many people as possible to enhance their commitment to the Torah's values and lifestyle, as based on the love and awe of God.

Fulfilling this commandment to the greatest extent possible will then elicit God's reciprocal response, and He will enable us to finally fulfill it in its optimal fashion, in the rebuilt Holy Temple, as we listen to the Torah read to us by the reinstated Jewish king, the Messiah.<sup>31</sup>

**Their obligation to learn the Torah for learning's sake:** As we have seen,<sup>32</sup> women's obligation to the study the Torah is largely equal to that of men. First of all, women are required to be conversant in all the laws that apply to them. This requirement

29. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, p. 106. 30. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 34, pp. 329-332. 31. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 34, pp. 211-216. 32. On Exodus 19:3.

**11** when all Israel comes to appear before God, your God, in the place He will choose, i.e., the Temple, you—Joshua, as their king, and likewise the kings that come after you<sup>19</sup>—**must read from this Torah before all Israel**, loud enough so that they can hear it **with their ears**. Erect a platform in the Temple courtyard from which the king will read publicly from<sup>20</sup> the beginning of the Book of Deuteronomy until the end of the first paragraph of the *Shema*,<sup>21</sup> then skip to and read the second paragraph of the *Shema*,<sup>22</sup> then skip to and read the passage about tithing,<sup>23</sup> then skip to and read the second passage about deadlines for tithing,<sup>24</sup> then skip to and read the passage about the blessings and the curses,<sup>25</sup> then go back to and read the passage about the king.<sup>26</sup>

**12 Assemble the people—the men, women, and children, and your resident aliens in your cities—the women in order that they be impressed with their obligation to hear and understand the Torah, and the men in order that they be impressed with their obligation to learn the Torah for learning's sake; and thus they all will revere God, your God, and they will safeguard the Torah by studying its instructions regarding how to do all that is taught in the words of this Torah.**

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

**11 You must read from this Torah before all Israel:** The sabbatical year teaches us three primary lessons:

- God is master over us; this is expressed by His command that we refrain from certain types of work during the sabbatical year.
- God is master over nature; this is expressed by His command that the earth rest during the sabbatical year.
- God is master over our possessions; this is expressed by His command that the produce of the sabbatical year, even if it grows on our property, be ownerless and available to all equally.

The passages that the king reads during the septennial assembly ceremony reflect these specific lessons, which this ceremony is meant to carry from the sabbatical year into our mundane lives:

- The beginning of the Book of Deuteronomy serves as an introduction to the following passages, exhorting the listeners to internalize them properly.
- The first paragraph of the *Shema* expresses God's mastery over us, which frees us from the world's materiality, enabling us to devote ourselves to Him, His Torah, and His commandments.
- The second paragraph of the *Shema* expresses God's mastery over nature, which He manipulates in accordance with our behavior (rewarding us with rain in the proper time if we fulfill His commandments, etc.), teaching us that our

livelihood depends primarily on His blessing and only secondarily on our own efforts.

- The passages about tithes express God's mastery over our wealth; as its owner, He commands us to give part of it to the poor.
- The passages containing the blessings and curses express our covenantal bond with God, elevating the previous three notions from the components of a relationship between two entities (us and God) to expressions of our inseparable oneness with God.
- Concluding with the passage about the king (and having these passages read by the king) emphasizes how we must subjugate ourselves and all aspects of our lives to God, for the purpose of the king is to inspire and imbue us, his subjects, with true devotion to God.<sup>27</sup>

**You must read from this Torah before all Israel:**

We saw above<sup>28</sup> that we are all required to appoint a metaphorical "king" over ourselves, i.e., a spiritual counselor responsible for ensuring that we stay firmly on the path of spiritual growth. This king's primary responsibility is to "read to us"—i.e., inculcate us with—the passages from the Torah that the real king reads to the people at the septennial assembly. The primary lesson is contained in the first paragraph of the *Shema*, which focuses on accepting "the yoke of the kingdom of heaven," i.e., submitting to God's authority. This is followed by the second paragraph of the *Shema*, which teaches us that material success is dependent upon heeding God's commands.<sup>29</sup>

19. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, pp. 322-326, vol. 34, p. 188. 20. *Sotah* 7:8; Rashi on *Sotah* 41a, s.v. *Shema veHayah Im Shamo'a*. 21. Above, 1:1-6:9. 22. *Ibid.* 11:13-21. 23. *Ibid.* 14:22-27. 24. *Ibid.* 26:12-15. 25. *Ibid.* 28:1-69. 26. *Ibid.* 17:14-20. 27. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, pp. 204-206. 28. On 17:15.



— ONKELOS —

13 ובניהוּן די לא ידעוּן ישמעוּן וילפוּן למדחל קדם יי אלהכוּן כל יומיא די אתון קמיין על ארעא די אתון עברין ית ירדנא לתמן למיורתא: 14 ואמר יי למשה הא קריבו יומיך לממת קרא ית יהושע ואתעמדו במשכן זמנא ואפקדנא ואזל משה ויהושע ואתעמדו במשכן זמנא: 15 ואתגלי יי במשכנא בעמודא דעננא וקם עמודא דעננא על תרע משכנא: 16 ואמר יי למשה הא את ששב עם אברהם ויקום עמא הדין ויטעי בתר טעות עממי ארעא די הוא עלל לתמן ביניהוּן וישבקון דחלתי וישנון ית קמי די גורית עמדות: 17 ויתקף רגזי בהון בעדנא והיא וארחקון ואסלק שכינתי מנהון ויהון למבו ויערען יתהון בישוּן סגיאן ועקו וימר בעדנא והיא הלא מדלית שכינת אלהי ביני ערעוני בישא האלין:

13 ובניהוּם אשר לא־ידעוּ ישמעוּ וילמדוּ ליראה את־יהוה אלהיכם כל־הימים אשר אתם חיים על־האדמה אשר אתם עברים את־הירדן שמה לרשתה: פ

◆ חמישי (ששי במחוברין) 14 ויאמר יהוה אל־משה הן קרבו ימִיךָ למוֹת קרא את־יהושע והתיצבו באהל מועד ואצוּנוּ וילך משה ויהושע ויתיצבו באהל מועד: 15 וירא יהוה באהל בעמוד ענן ויעמד עמוד הענן על־פתח האהל: 16 ויאמר יהוה אל־משה הנה ששב עם־אבתיך וקם העם הזה וינה | אחרי | אלהי גבר־הארץ אשר הוא בא־שמה בקרבּוּ ועזבני והפך את־בריתי אשר כרתי אתוּ: 17 וחרה אפי בו ביום־ההוא ועזבתיים והסתרתני פני מהם והיה לאכל ומצאֵהו רעות רבות וצרות ואמר ביום ההוא הלא על־בי־אין אלהי בקרבי מצאוני הרעות האלה:

— RASHI —

14 ואצונוּ. ואצונוּ: 16 נכר הארץ. גויי הארץ: 17 והסתרתני פני. כמו שאיני רוּאָה בצרתם:

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

in raising her children—is the one chiefly responsible for the education of her children. This is particularly true when they are young and at home most or all of the day, but also after they leave the house. In fact, it is *more* important for the mother to be actively involved in the education of her children that it is for the father, since the mother's unmatched empathy, love, and endearment toward her children is essential in inculcating them with enthusiasm for the lifestyle and values of Judaism. Within the context of raising her children as good Jews in general, the Jewish mother is also responsible for raising them to be enthusiastic about studying the Torah. One way she does this is by taking an interest in her children's studies and reviewing them with them.

It is therefore crucial that she herself be well-educated both in the letter and the spirit of the Torah—even in those parts of the Torah that do not specifically apply to her—in order to educate her children both correctly and effectively. For example, even though women are not required to wear ritual tassels (*tzitzit*), they should nevertheless know the laws pertaining to wearing them in order to be able to teach their sons how to do so properly and in or-

der to be able to review these laws with her children when they study them.

And finally, the woman also can uniquely enhance the Torah study of the male members of her household. By virtue of her innate, superior, womanly warmth and emotion, she infuses this warmth and emotion to her husband and children when she studies together with them or reviews their studies with them.

It is true that in past generations, women did not typically pursue the study of the Torah as a whole, and particularly not the philosophical or Talmudic underpinnings of the Torah's laws (although there have been notable exceptions). But now that, as stated, this pursuit on the part of women has become both possible and vital, it may be seen as yet another harbinger of the imminent advent of the messianic era, in which<sup>36</sup> "the earth will be filled with the knowledge of God as the sea covers the seabed."<sup>37</sup>

**17 Is it not because our God is no longer among us that these evils have befallen us?:** This verse may be read: "It is because my God is not within me that this evil has found me." Rabbi DovBer of

36. Isaiah 11:9. 37. *Sefer HaSichot* 5750, vol. 2, pp. 455-459.

**13 Their little children, who prior to this did not adequately know about the importance of religious behavior, must hear the Torah being read in this impressive ceremony and thereby learn to revere God, your God, all the days that you live on the land that you are crossing the Jordan River to possess."**

### The Poem of Witness

◆ *Fifth Reading (Sixth when combined)* **14 God said to Moses, "Behold, as you know,<sup>33</sup> the end of your days are approaching; you are about to die. Summon Joshua and stand together in the Tent of Meeting, and I will encourage him." So Moses and Joshua went and stood in the Tent of Meeting.**

**15 God appeared in the Tent of Meeting in a pillar of cloud. The pillar of cloud then stood above the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.**

**16 God said to Moses from the cloud: "Behold, you are about to lie with your forefathers, and after you do so,<sup>34</sup> this nation will rise up and stray after the deities of the nations presently occupying the land into which they are coming. They will forsake Me and violate My covenant that I made with them.**

**17 My fury will rage against them on that day, for I will abandon them, and once I cease to protect them, they will fall prey to suffering; and then, I will figuratively 'hide My face' from them, acting as if I do not see their suffering, until they repent.<sup>35</sup> They will be consumed, and many evils and misfortunes will befall them. They will say on that day, 'Is it not because our God is no longer among us that these evils have befallen us?'**

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#### CHASIDIC INSIGHTS

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encompasses a large part of Jewish law: the laws of daily conduct, life cycle, prayer, conducting business, interpersonal relationships, observing the Sabbath and holidays, kashrut, marital relations, oaths and vows, and so on. (And inasmuch as we expect the Messiah to come imminently, women should also be conversant in the laws that will apply to them when the Temple is rebuilt, such as the laws of ritual purity and sacrifices.) All this is besides the laws surrounding the six constant commandments: to believe in God, not to believe in other deities, to love and fear Him, to understand His oneness, and to avoid temptations. In order to fulfill these latter commandments properly, it is incumbent upon women to be educated in the inner dimension of the Torah, which expounds upon the inner relationship between God and us, both collectively and as individuals.

So, to a great extent, women's obligation to study the Torah is exactly the same as men's. The essential difference is that women are not obliged to learn those parts of the Torah that do not directly apply to them, whereas men are required to learn the entire Torah, "for learning's sake." Thus, beyond women's obligation, men are obligated to learn not just the laws that apply only to men (such as the laws of wearing ritual tassels [*tzitzit*]), but also the laws that

do not even apply to them specifically (such as, for laymen, the laws that apply to priests), as well as the Talmudic derivation of all the laws.

(Also, men have an obligation to study the Torah constantly (that is, every moment when they are not required or allowed to do something else), whereas women are not required to do this. Thus, theoretically, if a woman would learn all that she is required to and retain it perfectly, she would not have to spend all her spare time studying the Torah, whereas a man under the same circumstances would.)

However, especially nowadays, since technological advances have afforded both women and men much more free time than was formerly at their disposal, and since it is also common for women to pursue higher education, it is essential that women learn not only the dry laws that apply to them (which, as we said, is already quite a formidable task), but also the philosophical reasons behind the laws and even their Talmudic derivation, in order that they develop their intellectual abilities and talents in a way consonant with the spirit and holiness of the Torah.

Moreover, the woman—both as a housewife, setting the spiritual and moral tone of her home, and as a mother, intimately and continuously involved

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33. Above, v. 1. 34. See v. 29, below. 35. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 34, pp. 194-199.

— ONKELOS —

18 וְאֵנֹכִי הַסֵּתֶר אֶסְתִּיר פָּנַי בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַל כָּל־הָרָעָה  
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה כִּי פָנָה אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרַיִם: 19 וְעַתָּה  
בָּתְבוּ לָכֶם אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת וְלִמְדָה אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
שִׁמְרָהּ בְּפִיהֶם לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה־לִּי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בְּבִנִי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
שְׁשִׁי (שְׁבִיעִי בַמְּחוּבְרִין) 20 כִּי־אֲבִיאֲנִי אֶל־הָאָדָמָה |  
אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם וְזֶכֶת הָלַב וְדָבָשׁ וְאָכַל וְשָׁבַע  
וְדִשָּׁן וּפָנָה אֱלֹהִים אַחֲרַיִם וְעָבְדוּם וְנִאֲצוּנִי וְהִפֵּר  
אֶת־בְּרִיתִי: 21 וְהָיָה כִּי־תִמְצָאֻן אֹתוֹ רָעוֹת רַבּוֹת וְצָרוֹת  
וְעִנְיָתָהּ הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְפָנָיו לְעֵד כִּי לֹא תִשְׁכַּח מִפִּי  
זִרְעוֹ כִּי יִדְעֵתִי אֶת־יִצְרוֹ אֲשֶׁר הוּא עָשָׂה הַיּוֹם בְּמִטְרָם  
אֲבִיאֲנִי אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי:

— RASHI —

לְעֵד. שֶׁהִתְרִיתִי בּוֹ בְּתוֹכָהּ עַל כָּל הַמוֹצָאוֹת אוֹתוֹ: כִּי  
לֹא תִשְׁכַּח מִפִּי זִרְעוֹ. הִרִי זֶה הַבְּטָחָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁאִין  
תּוֹרָה מִשְׁתַּבַּחַת מִזְרָעִם לְגִמְרִי:

19 אֶת הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת. "הָאֲיוֹנִי הַשְּׁמִימִים" עַד "וְכִפֵּר  
אֶדְמָתוֹ עִמּוֹ": 20 וְנִאֲצוּנִי. וְהִכְעִיסוּנִי, וְכֵן כָּל  
"נִאֲוֹץ" לְשׁוֹן כַּעֲס: 21 וְעִנְיָתָהּ הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְפָנָיו

5. דברים לב, א'מג.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

To understand this, let us recall that Divinity, in its relationship to creation, may be divided roughly into three categories: (a) immanent Divinity, which is the life-force felt by all creatures, even if they do not recognize it as coming from God; (b) transcendent Divinity, which is not felt by creation but is nonetheless responsible for the existence of all created reality; and (c) God's essence, which transcends creation altogether, and whose nature can therefore not be grasped by any created being. As we have seen,<sup>46</sup> the nature of God's essence is so beyond the ken of creation that not only can we not conceive of it, we cannot even conceive what it is that we cannot conceive. It is, in this sense, doubly hidden from us, similar to how, at the other extreme, Divinity can be so hidden in exile that we are not even aware that it is hidden. The fact that God's double hiddenness stems from His double transcendence is alluded to by the fact that the word for "I" in this verse (*anochi*), the subject of the double verb of hiding, refers specifically, as we have seen,<sup>47</sup> to God's essence.

As we will soon see,<sup>48</sup> we have been assured that the Torah will never be forgotten by the Jewish people.

It therefore follows that no matter how severe the exile, even if we have sunk to the point that we mistake darkness for light and light for darkness, we will nevertheless always know that we are doing this, incredulous as it may seem to us at the time. If, based on this knowledge, we realize that what we are experiencing is in fact double darkness, and then further realize that every negative phenomenon in life is just a fallen version of that same phenomenon in its positive form, we will finally realize that the inverse correlate of double darkness is double light, i.e., the notion that God transcends transcendence.

Once this awareness of God's supra-transcendent essence dawns on us, we will realize that God is beyond everything, even the dichotomy of unlimitedness and limitation, and that He can therefore extricate us from the double bind of having to choose between opposing what appears to be familiar and surrendering to what we know to be darkness. This awareness inspires us to dedicate ourselves fully to God, returning to Him with infinite devotion.<sup>49</sup>

46. Above, on 19:15 and 30:11-14. 47. On Exodus 20:2. 48. V. 21. 49. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, pp. 193-195.



**18 I will hide My face on that day because of all the evil they have committed when they turned to other deities.'**

19 Addressing Moses as the representative of the entire nation, God continued, **'So now, write for yourselves this poem** that I am about to dictate to you,'<sup>38</sup> and again addressing Moses as the people's leader, God continued, **'and teach it to the Israelites. Place it into their mouths, in order that this poem be a witness for Me to the Israelites.'**

◆ *Sixth Reading (Seventh when combined)* **20 When I bring them to the land that I swore to their forefathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey, they will eat and be satiated, and live on the fat of the land. Then, feeling they no longer need Me, they will turn to other deities and serve them, provoking Me and violating My covenant.**

**21 When they encounter many evils and troubles, this poem will bear witness against them,** for in it I have warned them that these troubles would befall them if they forsake Me. This poem will be an effective witness **because I promise that it will not be forgotten from the mouths of their offspring;** they will always possess it and be able to read it, and the same will hold true for the entire Torah: it will never be forgotten by the Jewish people. This poem is necessary as a witness **because I know their evil inclination, including what they are planning to do today, even before I bring them in to the land that I have sworn to give them."**

— ❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧ —

Lubavitch explained this verse as referring to the Ba'al Shem Tov's teaching<sup>39</sup> that in order to show us our own faults—which we are naturally disposed not to notice, or to rationalize—God shows them to us in other people. Thus,

*Because my God is not within me:* Because I am not sufficiently spiritually attuned to be sensitive to my own shortcomings—

*That this evil has found me:* I have been forced to see my own evil reflected in my fellow Jew.

Rather than noticing others' faults, we should endeavor to notice their virtues; moreover, we should emphasize them, in our own minds, in their minds, and in the minds of all those around us. Just as the sages encourage us to inspire those around us to love God, so should we endeavor to inspire those around us to love every Jew, for, as Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi points out,<sup>40</sup> loving our fellow Jew is a means by which we can achieve love of God.<sup>41</sup>

**18 I will hide My face on that day:** In Hebrew, the verb "I will hide" is intensified by an emphatic repetition (הסתר אסתר), literally, "hiding, I will hide," or idiomatically, "I will hide, yes, hide"). The contextual implication of this form is that God's hiddenness will be particularly acute.

On a deeper level, however, the Ba'al Shem Tov interpreted this expression to mean that God's very hiddenness will itself be hidden from us,<sup>42</sup> that is, we will be so submersed in our exile that we will have forgotten what it was like not to be in exile; thus, we will not appreciate how utterly deplorable life has become. Having become accustomed to spiritual darkness, we will view it as natural, and consider light and goodness to be abnormal, even unwholesome. In the words of the prophet Isaiah,<sup>43</sup> "Woe to those who speak of evil as if it were good, and of good as if it were evil; who consider darkness light and light darkness; the bitter sweet and the sweet bitter."<sup>44</sup> This curse is apparently the worst possible—for when we are at least aware that we are suffering, we can attempt to negate the cause of the suffering and thereby bring our suffering to an end, but when we are not even aware that we are suffering, this hope does not exist.

Nonetheless, since we have pointed out<sup>45</sup> that all the curses in the Torah are really blessings too intense to be revealed as such *prima facie*, it follows that this dire prediction is also a blessing in disguise. In fact, since this is apparently the worst form of curse possible, it follows that it embodies the highest form of blessing possible.

39. See on Genesis 9:23. 38. I.e., 32:1-43, below. 40. *HaYom Yom*, 6 Tishrei. 41. *Sefer HaSichot* 5705, p. 92. 42. *Toldot Ya'akov Yosef, Bereishit* (22a). 43. 5:20. 44. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 7, pp. 41-42. 45. On Leviticus 26:14.

— ONKELOS —

22 וכתב משה ית תשבתהא  
הדא ביומא ההוא ואלפה לבני  
ישראל: 23 ופקיד ית יהושע בר  
נון ואמר תקף ואלים ארי את  
תעל ית בני ישראל לארעא די  
קנימת להון ומימרי יהי בסעדך:  
24 והיה כד שצי משה למכתב  
ית פתגמי אורייתא הדא על ספרא  
עד דשלימו: 25 ופקיד משה ית  
לואי נטלי ארון קמא די למימר:  
26 סיבו ית ספרא דאורייתא הדין  
ותשון יתה מסטר ארון קמא  
דיי אלהבון ויהי תמן כף לטהידי:  
27 ארי אנא ידענא ית סרבנותך  
ות קדלך קשיא הא עד דאנא  
קים עמכון יומא דין מסרבין  
הויתון קדם יי ואף ארי בתר  
דאמות: 28 כנישו לותי ית כל  
סבי שבטיכון וסרכיכון ואמלל  
קדמיהון ית פתגמיא האלין  
ואסדה בהון ית שמיא וית ארעא:

22 וכתב משה את השירה הזאת ביום ההוא וילמד  
את בני ישראל: 23 ויצו את יהושע בן נון ויאמר חזק  
ואמץ כי אתה תביא את בני ישראל אל הארץ אשר  
נשבעתי להם ואנכי אהיה עמך: 24 והי | ככלות משה  
לכתב את דברי התורה הזאת על ספר עד תמם:

◆ שביעי 25 ויצו משה את הלויים נשאי ארון ברית יהוה  
לאמר: 26 לקח את ספר התורה הזה ושמתם אותו  
מצד ארון ברית יהוה אלהיכם והיה שם בך לעד:  
27 כי אנכי ידעתי את מריך ואת ערפך הקשה הן  
בעודני חי עמכם היום ממרים היתם עם יהוה ואף כי  
אחרי מותי:

◆ מפטיר 28 הקהילו אלי את כל יקני שבטיכם ושטריכם  
ואדברה באזניהם את הדברים האלה ואעידה בם  
את השמים ואת הארץ:

— RASHI —

לך, ולא השליט יהושע עליהם בחייו של משה,  
ואף בחייו נגנזו קדם יום מותו, לקים מה שנאמר:  
"ואין שלטון ביום המות": ואעידה בם את השמים  
ואת הארץ. ואם תאמר: הרי כבר העיד למעלה:  
"העדתי בכם היום" וגו' התם לישראל אמר, אבל  
לשמים ולארץ לא אמר, ועכשו בא לומר: "האזינו  
השמים" וגו'.

23 ויצו את יהושע בן נון. מוסב למעלה כלפי שכניה,  
כמו שמפרש: "אל הארץ אשר נשבעתי להם":  
26 לקח. כמו: "זכור", "שמור", "הלך": מצד ארון  
ברית ה'. נחלקו בו חכמי ישראל בבבא בתרא –  
יש מהם אומרים: דף היה בולט מן הארון מבחוץ  
ושם היה מנח. ויש אומרים: מצד הלוחות היה מנח,  
בתוך הארון: 28 הקהילו אלי. ולא תקעו אותו היום  
בחצוצרות להקהיל את הקהל, לפי שנאמר: "עשה

6. שמות כ, ז. 7. דברים ה, יא. 8. שמוא"ב ג, כד. 9. יד, ב. 10. במדבר י, ב. 11. קהלת ח, ח. 12. ל, יט. 13. לקמן לב, א.

— CHASIDIC INSIGHTS —

transcended the limitations of physical space, reflect-  
ing God's infinity. The presence of both the engraved  
Torah and the inscribed Torah within the Ark alludes  
to the idea that we must both experience our intrinsic  
connection with the Torah and be prepared to carry  
that experience with us into our mundane lives.  
The consciousness inside the Holy of Holies—that

time and space, being creations of God and subject  
to His will, are really not bound by the limitations  
of time and space—is meant to disseminate beyond  
the boundaries of the Holy of Holies, eventually fill-  
ing the whole world and all its inhabitants with its  
transcendent Divine consciousness.<sup>61</sup>

61. Likutei Sichot, vol. 2, pp. 407-408.

**22** So Moses wrote down this poem later on that day and taught it to the Israelites.

### The Investiture of Joshua

**23** While they were still in the Tent of Meeting, God **commanded Joshua the son of Nun** from the cloud **and said: “Be strong and courageous! For you will bring the Israelites to the land that I have sworn to give to them, and I will be with you.** Moses enjoined you to consult with the elders and take their advice in matters relating to the internal affairs of the nation,<sup>50</sup> but I want you to be the sole authority in these matters and not just in matters of war. Force the people, including their elders, to do what you know they must do, whether or not they agree, for you must lead in the way appropriate to your generation, even if it is not the same way Moses led his generation or thinks that you should lead yours.”<sup>51</sup>

**24** When Moses finished writing down the words of this Torah in a scroll, until their end,

- ◆ *Seventh Reading* **25** Moses commanded the Levites, who carried the Ark of the Covenant of God, saying:

**26** “The inside cavity of the Ark is 14 handbreadths long.<sup>52</sup> The tablets housed in the Ark are each six handbreadths square,<sup>53</sup> so that leaves two free handbreadths in the Ark’s inner length. **Take<sup>54</sup> this Torah scroll and place it in this empty space alongside the Tablets of Testimony inside the Ark of the Covenant of God, your God, so that it remain there as a witness to you.**”<sup>55</sup>

**27** Addressing the people as a whole, he continued, “**For I know your rebellious spirit and your stubbornness. Even while I am still alive with you today, you are rebelling against God, so you will surely rebel after my death!**

- ◆ *Maftir* **28** Assemble before me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, and I will speak these words, i.e., the words of the following poem, **into their ears, and in this poem I will call upon heaven and earth**—not just as signs, as I have before,<sup>56</sup> but as actual witnesses to the covenant, to testify **against them** if they deny it.<sup>57</sup>

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#### ❧ CHASIDIC INSIGHTS ❧

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**26 Take this Torah scroll and place it alongside the Tablets of Testimony:** Thus, the Ark contained the Torah both engraved in stone and written on parchment. As has been explained,<sup>58</sup> the difference between engraved and written letters is that the former are part and parcel of the medium (the stone), whereas the latter are independent of the medium (the parchment) and grafted onto it. Thus, engraved

letters allude to our essential connection to the Torah, how “Israel and the Torah are one,” whereas written letters allude to how we preserve our connection to the Torah even during our mundane lives, when the heightened Divine consciousness we experience in Torah study and prayer recedes and we are more conscious of ourselves as independent agents.<sup>59</sup> As we have also seen,<sup>60</sup> the Ark of the Covenant

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50. Above, v. 7. 51. Rashi on v. 7, above; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 19, pp. 311-313. 52. Exodus 25:10-11. 53. Exodus 31:18. 54. *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 14, pp. 135-140. 55. *Bava Batra* 14ab; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 9, pp. 196-202. 56. Above, 4:26, 30:19. 57. Below, 32:1. 58. On Genesis 24:22. 59. See on Exodus 32:16. 60. On Exodus 25:8.

ONKELOS

29 ארי ידענא בטר דאמות ארי  
חבלא תחבולון ותסטון מן ארזא  
די פקדית יתבון ותערע יתבון  
בישתא בסוף יומיא ארי תעבדון  
ית דביש קדם יי לארגזא קדמוהי  
בעובדי ידיכון: 30 ומליל משה  
קדם כל קהל ישראל ית פתגמי  
תשבחתא הדא עד דשלימו:

29 כי ידעתי אחרי מותי כי־השחת תשחתון וסרתם  
מן־הדרך אשר צויתי אתכם וקראת אתכם הרעה  
באחרית הימים כי־תעשו את־הרע בעיני יהוה  
להכעיסו במעשה ידיכם: 30 וידבר משה באזני כל־  
קהל ישראל את־דברי השירה הזאת עד תמם:

ע' פסוקים (בפרשיות נצבים וילך ביחד). אדני"ה סימן.

RASHI

עליו כגופו, שכל זמן שיהושע חי, היה נראה למשה  
באלו הוא חי:  
חסלת פרשת וילך

29 אחרי מותי כי השחת תשחתון. והרי כל ימי  
יהושע לא השחיתו, שנאמר: "ויעבד ישראל את  
ה' כל ימי יהושע"? מכאן שתלמידו של אדם חביב

14. יהושע כד, לא.

\* Likutei Sichot, vol. 19, p. 298, footnote 3.

**29 For I know that immediately after my death, you will surely become corrupted and deviate from the way that I had commanded you,** because God has told me as much.<sup>62</sup> **Consequently, the evil will befall you at the end of days, because you did evil in the eyes of God, to provoke Him to anger through your idols,** which will be nothing more than **the work of your hands.**" In fact, however, the people did not become corrupt until after Joshua died,<sup>63</sup> but as far as God and Moses were concerned, Joshua's lifetime was an extension of Moses' own, for true teachers value their students' lives as their own.

The Israelites assembled together with their elders as Moses requested, but they were not summoned by trumpet blasts as usual, since God had instructed Moses to only use the trumpets as a sign of his kingship over the people,<sup>64</sup> and at this point his role as the people's leader was passing to Joshua. Joshua, on the other hand, could not employ the trumpets to summon the people since God had told Moses that since his kingship over the people will never be matched by any other king who will reign over them, only he should use these trumpets. For these reasons, Moses had in fact already stored away the trumpets the previous day.<sup>65</sup>

**30 Then, Moses spoke into the ears of the entire assembly of Israel the words of the following poem, until their completion.**

*Parashat Vayeilech* is only read by itself when it falls on the Sabbath of Repentance (i.e., the Sabbath between *Rosh HaShanah* and *Yom Kippur*), the *haftarah* for which is on p. 256.



62. Above, v. 16. 63. Judges 2:7. 64. Numbers 10:2. 65. Rashi on v. 28; *Likutei Sichot*, vol. 24, pp. 216-220.





*Dedicated in honor of our children*

**Nathan, Yitzchok,  
Moshe Lev,  
and Gilana**

*May you continue to grow in the ways  
of our holy Torah*

**Yuri and Deana Pikover**

