



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

מרדכי מלכא

רב ואב"ד עיה"ק אלעד ת"ו

יו"ר ועדת סת"ם העולמית

הרבנות הראשית לישראל

לשכת הרבנות הראשית אלעד. ראש העין. הרצליה

בד"צ אלעד*בתי הוראה*שרותי דת*רישום נישואין*כשרות*מקואות*עירובין

The office of Rabanoot Eled – in hesd of Rabbi MORDECHAI MALKA

Parashat Nitzavim

The Secret to a Favorable Judgment – “Kulchem – All of You”

The *parasha* begins (29:9-11) “Today you are standing [*atem nitzavim*], all of you [*kulchem*], before Hashem, your G-d, the heads of your tribes, your elders, your officers – every man of Israel [*kol ish Yisrael*]; your children, your women, and your convert who is in the midst of your camp, from the chopper of your wood to the drawer of your water; to pass you into the covenant of Hashem, your G-d, and into the curse that Hashem, your G-d, seals with you today.”

Questions:

- 1- There seems to be a redundancy in the opening *pasuk*. It begins by stating that “all of you” are standing today, which implies the **entire** Jewish Nation. If so, why does the *pasuk* continue by specifying all of the different Jews who were there? And if all of them are specified, why is there a need to write “all of you”?
- 2- Furthermore, there appears to be a redundancy at the conclusion of the first *pasuk*, which states, “every man of Israel.” Hasn’t the *pasuk* already stated “all of you,” as well as having listed the various groups that comprise the Jewish Nation?
- 3- Why does the first *pasuk* begin in the plural – *atem* – and conclude in the singular – *kol ish Yisrael*?
- 4- Rashi cites a Midrash (*Tanchuma, Nitzavim*) at the beginning of the *parasha*. The Midrash asks why *Parashat Nitzavim* follows the curses mentioned in *Parashat Ki Tavo*. The Midrash answers that when the Jews heard the 98 curses mentioned in the *parasha*, besides for the 49 mentioned in *Torah Cohanim [Bechukotai]*, their faces turned green. They said, “Who can survive these?” Therefore, Moshe began to appease them and said, “‘Today you are standing.’ You have angered Hashem many times, yet He has not obliterated you. You are standing before Him like the day which perpetuates, yet grows dark and then light. So too, He has shone His light upon you, and will do so in the future as well. The curses and the afflictions sustain you and stand you before Him.” The words of this Midrash require explanation. For if the curses will not be fulfilled even if the Jews anger Hashem, Heaven forbid, then the Torah appears false, Heaven forbid. On the other hand, if the curses befall the Jews if they act improperly, then how has Moshe appeased them?

Protection by Being *Kulchem*, “All of You”

The Midrash states further that just as the day can sometimes be dark and sometimes light, so too, said Moshe, even though Hashem presently makes things dark for you, He will ultimately illuminate you with an eternal light in the future. This is as the *pasuk* states (*Yeshaya* 60:19), “And Hashem will be for you an eternal light.” The Midrash asks when this will be, to which it replies, “When you will all be a single unit.” As a source, the Midrash cites the *pasuk* (*Devarim* 4:4), “And you who cling to Hashem, your G-d, are all [*kulchem*] alive today.” The Midrash draws a parable to this idea: Even if a grown man takes a bundle of reeds at one time, will he be able to break them at one time? However, one reed at a time, even a baby could break. So too, the Jewish Nation will not be redeemed until they are joined as one unit. From this Midrash we learn that the secret to being saved from all harsh decrees is to resemble the bundle of reeds. As long as they are one bundle, even the strongest man cannot break them. However, when there is dissention amongst them, and each reed stands by itself, even a baby can break it. This explains why the *pasuk* states *kulchem* [“all of you”], even though it specifies all of the different types of Jews. The Torah is teaching us that the



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condition to remain "standing" on the Day of Judgment is to be united - *kulchem* – like one man with one heart.

Unity Protects From All Misfortune and Harsh Decrees

I was overjoyed to see that I wrote similarly to R' Klonimous Kalman Epstein *zt"l* [passed away in 5583] in his *sefer Me'or Va'Shemesh*. I will therefore quote what he wrote. He points out the apparent redundancy in the *pasuk* to which we referred in questions one and two. He then alludes to the discrepancy that we made note of in question three. He explains that it is well known that one of the main fundamentals in Divine service and to the gateways of repentance is for friends to unite as one; to see your friend's positive qualities and his Divine service, but not to think about his faults. By doing so, he will feel ashamed of his own misdeeds and desire to possess deeds similar to his friend. This will inspire him to return to Hashem with all his heart. Additionally, by not focusing on others' shortcomings in mitzvah observance and performance of good deeds, and not hating them on account of it, and instead only wishing for their good, the Prosecutor will be powerless to prosecute him. This is because Hashem will also act mercifully with the Jewish Nation and overlook their sins. This, then, is the intention of the *pasuk*, "Today all of you are standing," implying that you are granted the ability to remain standing before Hashem, because the "heads of your tribes, your elders" are "every man of Israel," all lovingly united like one man with one heart.

The *Me'or Va'Shemesh* furthermore explains why the *pasuk* opens with the plural expression and concludes with a singular expression. He also asks about the *pasuk's* expression, "to pass you into the covenant [*le'avrecha be'brit*]." He also writes that it is worthwhile to understand what Rashi cites from the Midrash Tanchuma, quoted above, about Moshe Rabbeinu's appeasement of the Jews after they heard the curses in *Parashat Ki Tavo*. Moshe appeased them by saying that they had survived until now, and therefore they should be encouraged. The *Me'or Va'Shemesh* asks that perhaps they had survived only because they had not been deserving of a punishment prior to being warned!

He explains that Moshe was giving them advice about how to avoid having these curses befall them. He told them that the main means of protection from these curses was love and unity. When there is love and unity amongst the Jewish people, no retribution will befall them, as the *pasuk* states (*Hoshea* 4:17), "*Chavur atzavim Efraim hanach lo*, Efraim is attached to idolatry; leave him." In other words, the *pasuk* is hinting to the fact that if there is an "attachment" [*chibur*] amongst Jews, then even if they serve idols Heaven forbid, they will be left alone; the Prosecutor will not disturb them and no harm will befall them. By uniting as one, the Jews distance the curses and afflictions from themselves.

This is the *pasuk's* intention in stating, "Today you are standing, all of you." In other words, even though you heard all of the curses related to the covenant that were stated above, you will nevertheless remain standing by "heads of your tribes, your elders" being "every man [*kol ish*] of Israel," united as one. This is the meaning of the word *kol ish*, that all of you should be like one man. This is why the *pasuk* continues to say, "to pass you into the covenant." In other words, the unity will enable to "pass over" the curses inherent in the covenant. The *pasuk* continues, "In order to establish [*hakim*] you today as a nation to Him." *Hakim* implies standing, and the *pasuk* is teaching that unity will enable you to "stand" and be saved from all retribution. The *pasuk* continues to state, "And it is not only with you that I seal this covenant." This means that it is not only for Moshe's generation, men of great stature, who are being assured to be saved from all retribution through unity – rather, as the *pasuk* continues, "For all those who are here and all those who are not here,"



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even all the subsequent generations are assured of this – to bypass all of the curses, if they are united.

Unity is a Shield Against Retribution

Above, we quoted a *pasuk* from *Hoshea* which illustrated that unity can protect even from punishment on account of idol worship. Similarly, it states (ibid. 10:2), "Their hearts have become removed; now they will become desolate." In *Masechet Kallah Rabati* (5:1), our Sages expound that we see that baseless hatred among men is worse than idolatry. Despite the fact that Efraim worshipped idols, they were, nevertheless, left alone because they exhibited unity. However, when their hearts were not united, *then* they would become desolate.

Similarly, in *Masechet Derech Eretz* (7:37) it states, "R' Elazer Hakafer says: Love peace and hate strife. For even when the Jewish people are worshiping idols, if there is peace amongst them, Hashem says, 'I do not want to touch them ... Great is peace and hated is strife. How so? A city that has strife will be destroyed in the end, and our Sages have said, if there is strife in the city, there will be murder. A *beit kneset* in which there is strife, will be destroyed in the end. A house in which there is strife, will be destroyed in the end.'" [It states similarly in the *Sifri, Naso* 42].

Additional Proof From the *Dor Haflaga*

The *pasuk* states (*Bereishit* 11:6), "Hashem said, 'Behold, they are all one nation and one language, and this is what they start to do. And now, should they not be prevented from doing all that they planned to do?'" I believe that from Hashem's words the aforementioned principle can be learned – unity protects an individual from all misfortune and enables him to attain his heart's desires. *Parashat Noach* teaches about the *Dor HaMabul*, the Generation of the Flood and the *Dor Haflaga*, the Generation that was Dispersed. The sin of the *Dor HaMabul* was acting immorally and committing theft. Each individual was out for himself and did whatever he wanted without considering his fellow at all. Acting in such a manner destroys the world, to the degree that it wasn't worthwhile to maintain its existence. Therefore Hashem destroyed the world, because when there is dissention, each man interested only in himself, the world cannot last. However, the *Dor Haflaga*, who followed the *Dor HaMabul*, learned a lesson from the sin of the previous generation. They therefore decided to act in the opposite fashion by exhibiting unity, until all of mankind spoke one language and were united. One could ask how the *Dor Haflaga* was not punished for their sin of attempting to build a tower upon which they could wage war with Hashem, Heaven forbid. They also served idols and committed other terrible acts which are depicted in the *Midrashim*. How could it be that they were not punished? Rather, Hashem was saying that when people are united it is impossible to punish them; they can sin without fear of retribution, because their unity will protect them in this world. Therefore, Hashem could not, as it were, punish them for their wicked deeds. The only remaining option was to disperse them and put an end to their unity. This way they could be punished. From here was derived the slogan, "divide and conquer." Hashem revealed that the secret to controlling the masses is through the method of divide and conquer. We have therefore seen throughout world history that many kings have used this method as a primary tactic to solidify their kingdom. For when the people are united, it is impossible to rule them with an iron fist. We have seen this in our times as well, when revolutions against dictators and rulers suddenly occur when the people unite as one. This is what we witnessed occur in Tunisia, Egypt, and Syria. This teaches us about the great power of unity.



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Rebbi Meir was Saved Because He Waited for His "Brother" – the Light

The *Yalkut Shimoni* (*Miketz, remez 147*) states that R' Yehudah said in the name of Rav: A person should always enter the city when it is light outside [*ki tov*] and leave when it is light outside [*ki tov*]. Once Rebbi Meir was a guest at an inn, whose innkeeper used to be in the habit of robbing his guests. In the early morning hours, when it was still dark outside, he would awaken his guests and offer to escort them on the road. Once it was later in the day, he exclaimed, he would be unavailable to guide them on the road. This way, he would persuade his guests to leave when it was still dark. He would coordinate with a group of thieves and tell them what time to be on the road. After he would escort his guests and leave them, the thieves would rob the traveller. They would then divide the guest's belongings amongst themselves. Once, Rebbi Meir was a guest at this inn. As usual, the innkeeper offered to accompany Rebbi Meir and guide him on the road, but only during the hours when it was still dark outside. However, Rebbi Meir refused, explaining that he had arranged to meet his brother at a certain time, and that they would travel together. He therefore had to wait until his brother would arrive at the inn. The innkeeper waited, but no one arrived. He saw that when the sun came up, Rebbi Meir set out on the way. The man therefore asked him, "Where is your brother for who you waited?" Rebbi Meir answered, "He has already arrived and his name is '*ki tov*.'" The innkeeper remarked that he did not see any brother. Rebbi Meir replied that the light is called *ki tov*, as the *pasuk* states, "And G-d saw that the light was good [*ki tov*]." This is the brother that saved Rebbi Meir from the thieves. From here we learn that there are two ways to be saved from the various forms of harmful forces. Either that a person be accompanied by another individual, or for the light to be considered another person. Therefore, when a person sleeps in a room by himself, he should turn on a light so that he does not get harmed. You see from this story just how much unity can save an individual from retribution. The novel idea here is that even light can be considered accompaniment. Since others can see him and will join him, it is as if there are others already with him. This therefore serves to save him from harmful forces.

Words of Mussar

We have learned that the secret to protection from retribution and to nullifying all harsh decrees is unity. Now we can easily understand the Torah's advice that in order for the Jewish people to remain "standing" on the Day of Judgment and to triumph in judgment, they must be like one man with one heart. In whichever predicament the Jews find themselves in, each one must feel like a part of a whole. This way, they will be assured of being saved from all harm, and only good will be decreed upon them. Even though there is no single individual who can make peace amongst the entire Jewish Nation, nevertheless, each man should do his utmost that those around him, his congregation, or at the very least, his family, should be united. This has the power to protect and save from every harsh decree, for as our Sages teach, "There is no vessel which contains blessing like peace, as the *pasuk* states, 'Hashem blesses his nation with peace.'"

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordechai Malka