

נִצְבִּים

וַיֵּלֶךְ

NITZAVIM/YOU ARE STANDING
Devarim/Deuteronomy 29:10-30:20

VAYELECH/AND HE WENT
Devarim/Deuteronomy 31:1-30

Concerning the **double portion** that we have this week, **Saadia ben Yosef Ga'on**, prominent **Jewish philosopher** from the **900's**, writes:

“**Nitzavim** and **Vayelech** actually constitute **one single parasha**, and it is only that in **some years** the parasha is **split into two** (as opposed to **other instances**, where **two separate parshiyos will be combined together**). Thus, **even when Vayelech is read separately**, we can **derive a lesson** from the **reading of Nitzavim and Vayelech together**.

At first glance, the two terms **Nitzavim** and **Vayelech** appear to be **diametrically opposed**, **Nitzavim** means ‘**standing firmly**’ and in the **same position**; whereas **Vayelech**, which means ‘**he went**,’ indicates **movement**. So what is the **lesson** to be learned from **combining together** ‘**standing firmly**’ and ‘**moving**,’ a feat which does not appear to be at all possible?

Standing firmly represents **stability, reliability and strength**. A **king**, for example, remains **stationary on his throne**, and those who wish to see him must come from afar. **Moving**, on the other hand, is a **sign of growth and expansion**. Thus, the **combination of simultaneously** ‘**standing firmly**’ and ‘**moving**,’ (**Nitzavim-Vayelech**) represents: the **ability to grow without compromising one's prior position of strength**.

A **practical example** – When a **person grows** in his **knowledge of Torah**, there is a **danger** that his **newly found sophistication** may **negatively affect his prior quality of simple faith and dedication**. The lesson of our parasha is the need to **retain one's strong foundation of simple faith** – which is ‘**reliable**’ under all circumstances, even when the intellect fails – and **not allow it to become tarnished by one's understanding**.

The **lesson** here is **obvious**: Our **challenge** is to **harmonize Nitzavim with Vayelech** – the **stability of simple faith, together with constant growth and expansion**.” (End of quote)

The **foundation of our “faith”** is **solid and immovable**. The **Torah** is **solid**. As **believers in Yeshua**, **how do we express “growth”** in what is **immovable**?” **Galatians** refers to “**faith**” in **Yeshua** as being part of our **Torah foundation**:

*Galatians 3:6 just as Abraham "believed Yah, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." ⁷ Therefore know that **only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.** ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that Yah would **justify the Gentiles by faith (in the Messiah), preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." ⁹ So then those who are of faith (in the Messiah) are blessed with believing Abraham.***

Galatians goes on to address “**growth**” from a **negative perspective**. **Instead of growing through obedience in their Torah-based faith** which pointed to and included the **Messiah (the foundation)**, they were instead **relying** on the “**doing**” of the **commandments of the Torah**. Do you see the **difference**? **Sha’ul (Paul)** taught them to **believe in Yeshua, the Living Torah**, and then **out of love** proceed to **obedience**; but they were **instead placing their faith in the observance of the Torah**,

itself. They did **not understand** that their **immovable Torah foundation** was all about **faith in Yeshua the Messiah**. It was a “**heart**” issue which should have **grown into the keeping of the commandments** out of “**love**.” **Instead**, they saw their “**foundation**” as the **doing of the commandments themselves**. Their **confidence** was in their “**flesh**.” They were **using the Torah to earn their salvation**.

*Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not **obey the truth**, before whose eyes Yeshua the Messiah was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: **Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Torah, or by the hearing of faith**? ³ Are you so foolish? **Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh**? ⁴ Have you suffered so many things in vain -- if indeed it was in vain? ⁵ Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the **works of the Torah, or by the hearing of faith?** --*

Sha’ul desired for the Galatians to grow in “**faith**” out of a heart of “**love**” for their Messiah:

*Galatians 5:6 ... faith working through love. ⁷ You ran well. Who hindered you from **obeying the truth**?... ¹³ For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**. ¹⁴ For all the **Torah is fulfilled** in one word, even in this: “**You shall love your neighbor as yourself**.”*

“**Love**” is the **prerequisite for growing in our faith**. We will now see how this plays out in our reading. **Nitzavim** appears to **repeat the central theme of parashat Ki Tavo**. Note how we have an **agreement** with יהוה that **spells out the consequences for our actions**. Let’s compare **Ki Tavo** with **Nitzavim**:

Ki Tavo - Devarim 28:1 "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of יהוה your Elohim, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today... all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of יהוה your Elohim: ... ¹⁵ " But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of יהוה your Elohim, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

Nitzavim - Devarim 30:15 " See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, ¹⁶ "in that I command you today to love יהוה your Elohim, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and יהוה your Elohim will bless you in the land which you go to possess. ¹⁷ "But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ "I announce to you today that you shall surely perish...

Devarim 28 presents **two choices, both** having to do with “**actions**”... “**if you obey**” versus “**if you do not obey**.” Do you notice the **significant addition made in Devarim 30**? We see that “**love**” is now **added into the equation!** The **Father** is noting that our **inner commitment to “love” Him will result in obedience to His commandments**. So....what happens **when one obeys, but his obedience is not accompanied with “love” and inner commitment?**

The **ancient rabbis** teach that if the **inner commitment** of the **heart is not strong** because of a **lack of true “love,”** then **in the end** there will be **no way to prevent corruption and decay (30:17-18)**. This **weakness of the heart** will **eventually lead to idolatry** and spiritual separation. In some of his last words to the children of Israel, **Moshe attempts to get beyond their heads and into their hearts** where the **key to their destiny** lies. **“To love Him”** is **repeated** several times in our parasha:

Devarim 30:20 "that you may love יהוה your Elohim, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which יהוה swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

- Note how this fits in with Galatians – **“loving Him,”** which flows into **“obedience”;** **“clinging to Him”** because **“He is your life”**

A bit earlier in the chapter, יהוה’s **response to “repentance” (return)** is described as **enabling the Israelites** (by **“circumcising their hearts”**) to have the right **“heart”** attitude **“to love Him”** in order **“to live”**:

*Devarim 30:2 "and you return to יהוה your Elohim and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, **with all your heart and with all your soul...** ⁶ "And יהוה your Elohim will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love יהוה your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."*

The **opposite** of **“loving” יהוה** is **“to turn”** (poneh - פָּנֶה) **away from Him with one’s “heart.”** So we could say that the **opposite of “love” is not rebellion,** but **“indifference”** leading to **idolatry**:

*Devarim 29:18 "so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away (poneh - פָּנֶה) today from יהוה our Elohim, to go and **serve the gods of these nations...***

*Devarim 30:17 "But if your heart turns away (yefneh - פָּנֶה) so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and **worship other gods and serve them,***

Devarim 31:18 "And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done, in that it has turned (panah - פָּנֶה) to other gods."

Moshe knows that a **lukewarm heart,** or a **lack of inner devotion or passion,** will result in being **drawn to idolatry**. In the letters to the congregations in Revelation, **Yeshua** warns that **even with good “works,”** they **cannot neglect the attitudes of the heart** – **“love”** and **“repentance”**:

*Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write... ² "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil... ³ "and you have persevered and have patience, and **have labored for My name's sake** and have not become weary. ⁴ "Nevertheless **I have this against you, that you have left your first love.** ⁵ "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent** and **do the first works,** or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place -- **unless you repent.***

Therefore, on the **last day of his life**, Moshe is addressing the things that are **most important**. He does **not want** the people to **look at the Torah** as a **bunch of do's and don'ts**. He is **concerned** with the **"hearts"** of the people, for **obeying according to the spirit of the Torah** is the **only way to life!** We read of the **heart devotion** again in **Devarim 30**:

*Devarim 30:11 " For **this commandment** which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. ¹² "It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' ¹³ "Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' ¹⁴ "But the word (davar - דָּבָר) is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.*

What is the **"word"** (davar - דָּבָר) that is being referred to that is **"near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it?"** The **Ramban** claims that it refers to the **commandment** of **teshuvah** (תְּשׁוּבָה) – that is, **"repentance"** or the idea of **"returning"**. **Man** claims that **"repentance"** which leads to a **pure heart** is all the way **"into heaven"** or **"beyond the sea"**, thus **too far away to attain**. **Moshe assures them** that this is **not so**...it **"is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it."** The **potential** to **"love"** אהבה is **"in your hearts"**! The **key** is **"repentance"**! **Sha'ul** quotes from **Devarim** and expounds on this:

Romans 10:5 For Moshe writes about the righteousness which is of the Torah, "The man who does those things shall live by them." ⁶ But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way... "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Adonai Yeshua and believe in your heart that Yah has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

One achieves **true "repentance"** when he **understands** that he has **strayed from his Creator** by **sinning** and now he wants to **"return"** to Him. When this action is **truly from the heart**, his **Father** welcomes him **back into His embrace**. Is this not what the story of the **prodigal's son** was teaching?

Luke 15:18 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." ²⁰ "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. ²³ 'And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; ²⁴ 'for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

Inherent in the word **"return"** is the idea that one is **going back to the place he once was**. Because **Yeshua** paid the **penalty for our sins**, we can through **"repentance"** have **fellowship with the Father**, in a **relationship similar to what Adam and Chavah** (Eve) had. Thus we are able, in a way, to

“return” to the Garden where we can express our “love” for the Father by keeping His commands (keeping the garden – Bereshith 2:15).

There is a common expression – **to know him, is to love him.** When a **person loves another person,** it is **because the first person knows what the second person is all about.** **People appreciate and understand each other to the point that they develop a strong bond.** Since **understanding the Almighty is far beyond our comprehension,** how can we truly **“love” Him?** **Rabbi Frand tells an insightful story:**

“...how do we come to love Him? How can we come back to love Him out of ‘love?’ How can we achieve this kind of ‘return’ to Him?”

The **Netziv** answers by referring to the **mystical idea that Israel and the Holy One, Blessed Be He, are one.** A **father can love a son** even if he does not know him and **even if he never sees him.** The **first time that they meet,** they will be **immediately drawn to one another,** after even the slightest introduction. The **natural connection between parent and child bridges any gap** that may exist.

There was a **49-year-old adopted woman** in California, whose **adoptive parents told her** that she **originally came from Israel.** The woman had always noticed that she looked different than her parents. It was obvious that they were not her natural parents. She began to investigate her background. At about the same time, an Israeli journalist was doing an investigative article on a **scandal involving Moroccan Jews who first arrived in Israel in the early 1950’s.** Many **Moroccan mothers,** who could not speak the language well and did not have any connections in the country, were **told that their children died during childbirth.** In actuality, these **children were stolen and sold for adoption, both in Israel and overseas.**

The **woman from California traveled to Israel and met with the investigative reporter.** They **uncovered certain documents,** and went back to the hospital where she was born. To make a very long story short, **DNA testing enabled the woman to find her Moroccan mother –** who had been told that her child had died shortly after delivery, 49 years earlier.

These were **two women** who came **from completely different cultures.** They had nothing to do with each other for nearly five decades, for almost the entire lifetime of the daughter. **When they met for the first time, they fell into each other’s arms and began kissing each other and crying uncontrollably.**

The **mother did not know the daughter,** and the **daughter did not know the mother.** They **did not know each other’s language and could not even communicate except** through their **tears and their kisses and their hugs.** **Why did they react this way? They reacted this way because this was a mother and her daughter.**

Listen again to the words of the Netziv: a father and son – even if they never met one another –nevertheless, when they do meet, are drawn to one another after the slightest introduction, because nature helps out.

The **Netziv** then adds that **what we observe among a flesh and blood parent and child is also true of the reunion (teshuvah) between our Father in Heaven and His wayward children. The matter is not distant from us. Despite the fact that I am human and He is Eternal. Despite the fact that I haven't had anything to do with Him for decades, He is our Father and we are His children.** Therefore it is *'within the power of your mouth and the power of your heart to achieve it.'* (Devarim 30:14)

The matter is readily accomplished. **The bond between parent and child is easily repaired and can never be permanently broken.**" (end of quote)

Thus **all of Israel** will **"return" (שׁוּבָה)** to the Father. The prophet **Hosea** describes the process of **"repentance/return"** which parallels the words of Moshe:

*Hosea 14:1 O Israel, **return** (שׁוּבָה) to יהוה your Elohim, For you have **stumbled because of your iniquity**; ² Take **words** (devarim - דְּבָרַיִם) with you, **And return** (שׁוּבָה) to יהוה. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously, For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips...⁴ " I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him.⁵ I will be like the dew to Israel...⁶ His branches shall spread; His beauty shall be like an olive tree...⁷ Those who dwell under his shadow shall **return** (שׁוּבָה); They shall be revived like grain, And grow like a vine. Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon.⁸ " **Ephraim shall say, 'What have I to do anymore with idols?' I have heard and observed him. I am like a green cypress tree; Your fruit is found in Me.**"⁹ Who is wise? Let him understand these things. Who is prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of יהוה are right; **The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them.***

"Love" and **"repentance"** are two responses to the Almighty's grace that come from a **"heart"** of **"faith."** Moshe wanted the Israelites to have this understanding of **"faith"** before he left them. Both **"love"** and **"repentance"** were necessary for their survival. We know that the Israelites fell short of the ideal and therefore entered into the prophesied exile. The prophets throughout the centuries would continue the message, although most of their listeners did not **"repent."** Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist) again picked up the message of **"repentance"**. But it was Yeshua, through His **"love,"** who made it possible for our **"return"** into His Garden Kingdom. May we be found faithful in our response to His wonderful gift!

*Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through **faith**, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of Yah,⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which Yah prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle