

# VAYEILECH

52nd of the 54 sedras;  
9th of 11 D'varim



Written on 72 lines in a Torah (rank: 53)

3 Parshiyot; 2 open, 1 closed

30 p'sukim - ranks 54th (11th in D'varim)

553 words - ranks 53rd (10th in D'varim)

2123 letters - ranks 53rd (10th in D'va.)

## MITZVOT

2 of 613, both positive. The last two, according to Sefer HaChinuch; Rambam counts one more in Haazinu.

## Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

### The Nitzavim Vayeilech story

Rosh HaShana cannot fall on SUN, WED, or FRI (LO ADU ROSH). That means that it can be MON, TUE, THU or Shabbat. When it is THU-FRI or Shabbat-SUN, Nitzavim and Vayeilech are combined for the Shabbat before RH and Haazinu is Shabbat Shuva.

When RH is MON-TUE or TUE-WED (as this year), there is a Shabbat between YK and Sukkot, on which we read Haazinu. In these kinds of years, Nitzavim is read alone on the Shabbat before RH and Vayeilech is read on Shabbat Shuva.

Nitzavim is always read on the last Shabbat of the year. Vayeilech is a different story. Sometimes it is also read on the last Shabbat and sometimes it is read on the first Shabbat of the year.

Vayeilech was read on the first Shabbat of 5782 (the year just ended). This year (5783) begins with Vayeilech and ends IYH with Nitzavim-Vayeilech (since RH of 5784 is scheduled to be Shabbat and Sunday). This means that Vayeilech is read twice in one year.

Actually, to say that there are some years when we do not read Vayeilech at all, is not exactly so. When Nitzavim is read alone on the last Shabbat of the year, the first 13 p'ukim (out of 30) of Vayeilech are read at Mincha of that last Shabbat. It is the last 17 p'sukim of Vayeilech that are sometimes not read at all during some years.

To summarize (?), let's use the following codes: M means RH of a specific year is Monday (and Tuesday). Tu for Tuesday (and Wednesday). Th for Thursday (and Friday). Sh for Shabbat and Sunday. MTh (for example) will mean the year begins on a Monday and the following year begins on a Thursday.

Years can be MTh, MSh (like this year, 5783), TuSh, ThM, ThTu, ShM, ShTh, MM, TuM, ThTh, ShSh.

Vayeilech will be read once in ShTh, MM, TuM, ThTh, and ShSh years.

It will be read twice in MTh, MSh, and TuSh years.

And not at all in ThM, ShM, and ThTu years.

How's this for an overdose of Calendar trivia?

## **Kohen** - First Aliya 3 p'sukim - 31:1-3

[P>31:1 (6)] Moshe Rabeinu concludes his words to the People and tells them that at age of 120, he is no longer able to lead them.

And that G-d has told Moshe that he will not be crossing the Jordan River, so his journey is truly over. He tells them that G-d will be with them, destroy the nations that they will encounter, and that Yehoshua will be the one to lead them.

## **Levi** - Second Aliya 3 p'sukim - 31:4-6

Moshe reminds the People of the victories they have had, and tells them to be strong and courageous. G-d won't abandon them.

## **Shlishi** - Third Aliya 3 p'sukim - 31:7-9

[S>31:7 (7)] Moshe then speaks to Yehoshua in front of the assembled people, and asks him to be strong, for

he will be leading the people and he will be in charge of conquering and settling the Land. G-d will be guiding you "every step of the way".

When Moshe finished writing the Torah, he gave it over to the Kohanim, "the carriers of the Ark".

## **R'vi'i** - Fourth Aliya 4 p'sukim - 31:10-13

Moshe next commands the People concerning the mitzva of **Hak-hel** [612, A16 31:12]. On Sukkot following a Sh'mita year, when the people gather in Jerusalem for the Chag, the king shall read (parts of) the Torah to the multitude. The people are to gather at the Beit HaMikdash - men, women, and children - in order to learn, to fear G-d, to hear and understand, and to commit to fulfill all the teachings of the Torah. And the youngsters who have not yet learned, will hear and learn to revere G-d "all the days they shall live in the Land your are about to enter".

HAK-HEL is a mitzva that is in effect only when we have the Beit HaMikdash, a king, Sanhedrin... In our days, there is a ZEICHER L'HAK-HEL commemoration of HAK-HEL held in the Kotel plaza. This has been happening officially, every 7 years since 1945.

Remember that this is not HAK-HEL, it is a commemorative thereof. Furthermore, we should see it as a commemoration of the past and an anticipation of the future - may we experience real Hak-hel soon, in our time.

# Chamishi 5th Aliya 6 p'sukim - 31:14-19

[P>31:14 (17)] G-d calls to Moshe to take Yehoshua and appear with him at the OHEL MOED. G-d's Presence descended to the Tent in the form of a Cloud.

G-d tells Moshe that after his death, the people will rebel against Him, stray from the proper path, and embrace other gods. G-d announces that He will show His anger by "hiding His Face" from them. This is a reference to the well-known HESTER PANIM, which manifests itself as G-d "working behind the scenes" only, in hidden, subtle ways.

**SDT:** This prophecy by no means "obligates" that generation, or any generation, to turn to idolatry. It is possible for the prophecy never to come true. And this would not impugn the truth of Torah or Moshe's status as a prophet. We always have the challenge not to turn away from G-d, and the ability to remain faithful to Him - even in the face of prophecies and predictions to the opposite.

Next is the command to write "The Song" (namely the whole Torah), to teach it to the people, so that it should serve as a testament among the People of Israel. This is the last mitzva of the Torah [613, A18 31:19], to write a Sefer Torah.

# MITZVAnotes

Our Sages include in this mitzva the significance of acquiring Sifrei Kodesh (holy books) from which to learn. Since the Torah itself specifies that the "purpose" of writing a Torah scroll is to learn and teach from it, then writing, buying, acquiring all learning texts would be in the spirit of this mitzva.

This became so when the Sefer Torah was no longer used as the text for learning, but was relegated to the Aron Kodesh in shul for public reading of the Torah. Sifrei Kodesh took over (so to speak) as the texts for learning and teaching.

The RO"Sh (Rabeinu Asher) takes this idea one significant step further - he says that since in our day, the Torah scroll is no longer used as a teaching or learning text - the MAIN fulfillment of this mitzva "to write a Sefer Torah" is the building of a personal Torah library (and use it well). Buy Torah texts from which to learn and teach. He adds that it is also praise-worthy if one is privileged to write a Sefer Torah as well. This is an unusual turn-about, which emphasizes the importance of buying s'forim - AND USING THEM.

**SDT:** "...and teach it to the People of Israel - place it in their mouths." From here the Gemara teaches us that one must review and review his teachings with his students until they understand.

It is not sufficient to just teach; one must work very hard until his students really understand, until it is in their mouths.

## **Shishi** - Sixth Aliya 5 p'sukim - 31:-20-24

Because, G-d explains, I am bringing the people to a Land flowing with milk and honey, the People will eat in contentment and turn from G-d. The Torah, however, will not be completely forgotten from the lips (and hearts) of future generations. (This will be "their ticket back".) Moshe wrote the Torah on that day and taught it to the People. G-d "commanded" Yehoshua to be strong and courageous in his new role as leader. Moshe completed the writing of the Torah. (Some say that Moshe even wrote the final 8 p'sukim of the Torah, which discuss his death; others disagree.)

## **Sh'VII** Seventh Aliya 6 p'sukim - 31:-25-30

Moshe commands the Leviyim to take the Torah and place it at the side of the Aron. (Some say that the Torah was in the Aron; others say that it was on a shelf attached to the side of the Aron.) Moshe asks for the leaders of the People to assemble for his final words to them. Moshe tells of the prophecy/prediction of the rebelliousness of the People. Moshe speaks the

words of the Song - here probably referring to Haazinu - to all the people, in its entirety.

The last three p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

## **Haftara** 22 p'sukim Hoshea 14:2-10 and Yoel 2:15-27

*There are various customs for this haftara - this one seems to be standard and is based on Luach Eretz Yisrael.*

### **SHUVA YISRAEL AD HASHEM...**

These opening words of the Haftara give the Shabbat its name and basically say it all. Return to G-d. The following pasuk emphasizes the power of prayer in the T'shuva process. The command to repent is accompanied by wonderful promises (prophecies) of redemption and restoration of the former glory of Israel.

The passage from Yoel gives us a Shofar connection to T'shuva.

Another encouraging note as we face the task of returning to G-d, is His assurance that He is among us - even before our T'shuva. And that He will not shame His people ever.

The last pasuk in Hoshea states, "Who is wise who understands this, an intelligent person will know: G-d's ways are straight, the righteous will walk upon them and the sinner will trip on them." Very often it is the

same activity or the same thing that people handle differently, with the result that one person succeeds and the other falters. It is often a matter of attitude.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Haftara was not “chosen” because of the sedra, they do have some points in common. One example: The sedra speaks of rain in a figurative, spiritual sense and the Haftara mentions its more literal meaning in connection with prosperity. The prosperity angle is particularly interesting, since it appears in the sedra as a criticism and in the Haftara as a sign that G-d has forgiven His people. This fits with what was mentioned above about the last pasuk in Hoshea.