

NITZAVIM VAYEILECH

STATS	Nitzavim	Vayeilech	N & V
of 54 sedras	51st	52nd	–
of 11 in D'varim	8th	9th	–
lines in a Torah	87	72	159
rank	52	53	(41)
Parshiyot	4	3	7
P'tuchot	1	2	3
S'tumot	3	1	4
P'sukim	40	30	70
rank (Torah/D'v)	53/10	54/11	(48)
Words	657	553	1210
rank	51/8	53/10	(42)
Letters	2575	2123	4698
rank	51/8	53/10	(39)
MITZVOT	0	2	2
positive	0	2	2
prohibitions	0	0	0

N & V are the two shortest sedras in the Torah, but their p'sukim are the two longest in the Torah. Look at the (hypothetical) rank of the combined N/V and notice the jump from p'sukim thru words to letters.

When Rosh HaShana is Thursday (Fri) or Shabbat (Sun), Nitzavim and Vayeilech are combined and Haazinu will be read on Shabbat Shuva.

When RH is Monday (Tue) or Tuesday (Wed), there will be a Shabbat between Yom Kippur and Sukkot on which Haazinu will be read. In that

case, Nitzavim will be read on its own on the Shabbat before RH, and Vayeilech will be read on Shabbat Shuva.

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P>] and [S>] 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.

Kohen - First Aliya - 3+3+14 = 20 p'sukim - 29:9-28

[P>29:9 (20)] Having so recently heard the frightful Tochacha and the curses that are invoked against those who betray G-d, Israel is understandably "nervous" about its future, to say the least. Nitzavim therefore, begins on the positive, reassuring note that we are ALL standing before G-d and entering again into a covenant with Him. These opening p'sukim call our attention to the "inclusiveness" of the People of Israel. We are made up of scholars and leaders, judges and functionaries, men, women, and children, converts, wood cutters and water gatherers (Ashkenazim and S'faradim, religious

and secular, Mitnagdim and Chasidim, FFBs and BTs...). But together they all stood to reaffirm their commitment to G-d. Jewish Unity has always been our strength, its lack, our greatest weakness.

SDT: Rav Aharon of Karlin pointed out that ATEM is made of the letters of the word EMET, truth. This, he said, is the only way to achieve LIFNEI HASHEM, standing before G-d.

SDT: The Alshich points out that the Torah describes the People as "all of you, before G-d", and then proceeds to delineate different types of Jews. Before G-d, we ARE all the same. Whatever differences might exist pale into insignificance in comparison with the fact that we are all G-d's creations. Differences become important from our perspective. We view some people as more valuable than others. But we really have no way to know how G-d views us. In His eyes we are all standing erect this day...

And there is more. The second three-pasuk set proclaims that it is not just the entire People of Israel who were alive at the time, who are making this covenant with G-d, it is also our ancestors to whom G-d made His special promises, and to the generations of Jews in the past AND the future, whose spirit (souls) were present at this covenant.

Perhaps this is the meaning of the

prophecy to Avraham Avinu that his descendants will be as countless as the stars of the heavens. Take the millions of Jews alive today, add the millions who have preceded us, add the - how many more? - future generations, and we can truly be called "without number". Nations that have come to an end, can be numbered. An eternal people cannot ever be counted.

As he has done several times before, Moshe Rabeinu presents both sides of the covenant with G-d before the People: You have been in Egypt and you are aware of their abominable practices and those of the other nations which you have encountered. Perhaps there is a rebellious individual among you who will turn from G-d and embrace another faith.

SDT: The phrase describing what we would today refer to as a "rotten apple" is SHORESH POREH ROSH V'LA'ANA, literally a poisonous root of gall and wormwood. The initial letters of this phrase rearrange to spell SHOFAR, the antidote to this negative facet of Jewish life. The Shofar must awaken the ones who stray and start them on the path to T'shuva.

A person who turns to another religion will be severely punished, even if he thinks otherwise. These p'sukim are a miniature version of the Tochacha from last week.

The portion concludes with the statement that there are mysteries of this world that are G-d's and there are revealed truths that belong to us and our children. Our challenge is to remain faithful to the Torah.

Rashi interprets this pasuk in the narrow context of the punishments presented in the previous p'sukim. However, this pasuk also has wide applications. In all areas of human knowledge - science, math, history... - there are mysteries and there are revealed truths. But remember, today's mysteries can be revealed tomorrow, next year... or never.

And/or we can apply the concept of the pasuk to things that happen in this world that we don't understand. Whether it is the classic, "TZADIK V'RA LO...", that righteous people sometimes have a very hard life, and wicked people seem to enjoy their lives, or whether it is coping with the death of a child R"L, or attempting to understand the SHO'AH, or October 7th, and a myriad of things that strike us as unfair, things that prompt us to "question G-d" - for all of the above, this pasuk succinctly tells us that there are mysteries in this world that are understood by G-d only, and that (only) those He chooses to reveal to us, become ours to understand. This concept does not "answer" nagging questions, but it must become part of our belief system, because it is a truth that can help us cope, and

understand that we are not capable of understanding everything.

Levi - Second Aliya - 6 p'sukim - 30:1-6

[S>30:1 (10)] From the perspective of absolute justice, if we break our agreement with G-d, punishment should be swift and complete. But we could not survive such an existence. This portion of Nitzavim tells us that if (when) we break the covenant and are dispersed among the nations as punishment, all hope is not lost. We have the golden opportunity to return to G-d - and He will help the process along. This too becomes part of the agreement with G-d. The concepts of return in a physical and spiritual sense are intermingled in this portion.

The wayward Jew turning back towards HaShem and the Torah, and the Jew exiled to a distant land coming back to Israel are presented simultaneously. This represents the dual nature of T'shuva. What a wonderful opportunity beckons each Jew - and the Jewish People as a whole - in being given a second (and 3rd and 4th...) chance to live a true Torah life.

MITZVAnotes

Rambam and Sefer HaChinuch (and others?) do not count T'SHUVA per se among the 613 mitzvot. Sefer HaCharedim, the SMA"K, and others

do count T'SHUVA as one of TARYAG. There is no need to "justify" counting Repentance as one of the mitzvot in the Torah - The Torah commands, V'SHAVTA AD HASHEM ELOKECHA, And you shall return to HaShem, your G-d. But how do we explain the absence of T'shuva from some lists of mitzvot.

One can say that Rambam counts only specific, distinct mitzvot. A command which is all-inclusive, such as "Keep My mitzvot", "Be holy", "Be straightforward with G-d", is not numbered on its own, because it is really part of all mitzvot, rather than its own distinct mitzva. T'shuva can be viewed the same way. Part of the mitzva to Recite the Sh'ma is that if one does not, or does it without kavana, then he must repent his ways and say the Sh'ma properly. Part of the prohibition of speaking Lashon Hara is that if one does, then he must repent. More than T'shuva being its own mitzva, it is an add-on to all the others.

Or, we can look at T'shuva as a gift from G-d. He doesn't HAVE to command it. He just has to let it be possible. And we should jump at the opportunity. The Torah does not have to command us to breathe. We do it because it is essential to living. So is T'shuva. The Torah doesn't have to tell us to repent, just that we can and how to do it.

On the other hand, there is one aspect of T'shuva that IS counted by Rambam as a mitzva among the 613 - Vidui, verbal confession. This is a specific aspect of T'shuva that DOES "qualify" for the Rambam's count. And yet, as mentioned earlier, some mitzva-counters DO count T'shuva among the 613. Just know that whether T'shuva is numbered among the 613 or not, everyone agrees that it is an extremely important mitzva, always applicable - but especially at this time of year.

The last pasuk of this portion contains one of several ELULs, in the form of Rashei Teivot, initial letters. And G-d will circumcise ET L'VAVCHA V'ET L'VAV zar'echa, your heart and the heart of your children. Baal HaTurim actually says that this is why we say S'lichot during Elul.

Shlishi - Third Aliya -
4+4 = 8 p'sukim -
30:7-14

If we return to G-d, then G-d will rain the curses upon our enemies. We have only to be faithful to HaShem and keep His mitzvot, and all His blessings will be showered upon us. Again a "pitch" is made for T'shuva. And again. And the T'shuva should be completely sincere.

[S>30:11 (4)] But how can we hope to keep our part of the agreement? Is not

the Torah so exalted and remote that a mere mortal has no chance of attaining spiritual heights? The answer is eloquently stated in the famous words of the Torah - **For this mitzva is not in the heavens nor is it across the ocean.** It is so very close and attainable that every Jew can feel confident in taking up its challenges. It is up to us to make the commitment, feel it in our hearts, and ACT upon it.

This idea applies, on one level, to T'shuva - T'shuva being the topic of the immediately preceding passage. But it can also apply to all the mitzvot - the whole Torah. The Torah was given to us. It is accessible to us all.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya - **6+3+3 = 12 p'sukim -** **30:15-31:6**

The fourth Aliya is ALWAYS the bridge between the two parts of a double sedra

[S>30:15 (6)] The concept of Free Will is beautifully expressed in the concluding portion of Nitzavim. It marks the difference between human beings and all other creations. The Sun and the Moon "fulfill" G-d's commands without conscious decisions. A bee doesn't think things out and decide to pollinate a flower. Nor does a lion attacking a weak zebra evaluate the morality of his act. Only humans have the choice to do good or evil. G-d recommends and pleads (so to speak) with us to choose Life and Good, but

He leaves the choice to us. That is why we are accountable for our actions; and that is why we stand before G-d in judgment on Rosh HaShana - animals do not. The choice is offered, but not only does G-d "command" us to choose Life, He warns us again of the devastating results of the wrong choice. Heavens and Earth are called upon to witness this most significant fact of human existence. It is the Land of Israel that is the "prize" for choosing wisely, as G-d had promised Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov. G-d reconfirms His covenant and promises to us.

We have Free Will. We can be whatever kind of people we choose to be. We have His recommendation and encouragement to choose Life over Death, Good over Evil. Our proper choices will earn us long life and a firm hold on the Land that He promised our ancestors.

Let us heed the warnings of Nitzavim; let us be inspired by the beautiful challenges of Nitzavim; let us be uplifted by the lofty messages of Nitzavim; and let us have a "successful" Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur, and a happy & healthy year of peace & prosperity. It is no mere coincidence that Nitzavim ALWAYS is read on the final Shabbat of the year, right before Rosh HaShana.

[P>31:1 (6)] Moshe Rabeinu concludes his words to the People and tells them that at his age of 120 years, 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 in Eretz Yisrael, and that Yehoshua will be the one to lead them. Moshe reminds the People of the victories they have had, and tells them to be strong and courageous. G-d won't abandon them (us).

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 3+4 - 7 p'sukim - 31:7-13

[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.

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."

Shishi - Sixth 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 HESTER PANIM which manifests itself as G-d "working behind the scenes" only, in hidden, subtle ways.

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.

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] (according to

Sefer HaChinuch), to write a Sefer Torah.

MITZVAnotes

Our Sages include in this mitzva the significance of acquiring Sifrei Kodesh (holy books) from which to learn, study and teach Torah. 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.

The RO"Sh (Rabeinu Asher) takes this idea one significant step further - he says that since in our day, the Torah scroll has been relegated to the Aron Kodesh in shul and is used for public reading, but no longer as a teaching text - the MAIN fulfillment of this mitzva "to write a Sefer Torah" is the building of a personal Torah library (that will be used). Buy Torah texts from which to learn and teach. He adds that it is also praiseworthy if one is privileged to write a Sefer Torah as well. This is an unusual turn-about, which emphasizes the importance of buying s'farim - AND USING THEM.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 5+6 = 11 p'sukim - 31:20-30

Because, G-d explains, I am bringing the people to a Land flowing with milk

& 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 (Rambam says that he wrote 13 Torahs - one for each tribe and one in the care of the Kohanim/Leviyim) 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 and say that Yehoshua wrote those verses. This question is presented in the Gemara and intensely discussed by commentaries.)

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 3 p'sukim are reread for the Maftir.

Haftara - 23 p'sukim - Yeshayahu 61:10-63:9

Seventh and final of the Haftarot of Consolation. Yeshayahu prophesies of when there will be universal peace and Jerusalem will not only be rebuilt, but will be the center of universal worship of G-d. Not only will the nations of the world recognize The One G-d, they will also acknowledge the People of Israel as His People. The idea of universal acceptance of G-d fits with our notion that ALL people are judged by G-d on Rosh HaShana, not just the Jewish People.