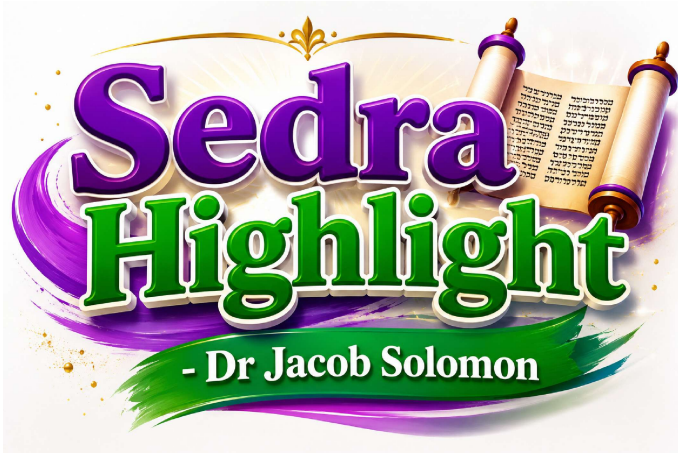




NITZAVIM-VAYEILECH

'You are standing today before G-d... so you may pass into the covenant with G-d.' (29: 9,11)

This section introduces the climax to the Book of D'varim, on the day of Moshe's death (c.f. Rashi to 29:9). After the blessings and the curses of the previous Parasha, Moshe assembles the Israelites to renew the covenant with G-d. The original covenant at the time of the Giving of the Torah was that if the Israelites would serve Him and keep His Commandments, they would be a 'treasured people' (Sh'mot 19:5). They indeed responded with: 'We shall do all that G-d tells us' (ibid 7). Now it was time to renew that commandment: 'in order to establish you today as a people to Him, and He be G-d to you' (29:14). And the terms of that Covenant were extended with something not explicitly mentioned at Har Sinai: 'that which is revealed, is for us and our children to observe this Torah' (29:28). Rashi explains that the Israelites are not only

responsible for their own shortcomings, but (as the Ohr HaChayim expands at length), also for what is 'revealed to us' - the shortcomings of others. By the terms of this covenant, all Israelites were in addition obliged to help each other observe the Torah, and prevent each other from violating the Torah.

However the subjects of the covenant - the people - undergo changes of reference. At the beginning they are referred to in the plural: 'You - ATEM - are standing before G-d'. But the actual initiation of the relationship is in the singular: 'So that you may pass - L'OVRECHA - into the covenant... in order to establish you OT'CHA as a people.' Only when Moshe expands the scope of the covenant does he revert to the plural: 'Not just with you - ITCHEM - do I perform this covenant'.

This change and reversion of plural and singular gives us an insight into the scope of this covenant of Moshe. For he continues 'Not just with you do I perform this covenant... but also with whoever is not here today' (29:14) - meaning those born in the future (Midrash Tachnума: Nitzavim 3, quoted by Rashi). Ourselves very much included.

Thus the opening section to the Parasha is being simultaneously addressed to two categories of people. To those privileged to be at

Moshe's final address. And to those not yet born - those of generations of the future.

This might explain why the actual commandment is in the singular: 'So that you may pass - L'OVRECHA - into the covenant... in order to establish you - OT'CHA - as a people'. A person can 'stand before G-d' - he or she may become knowledgeable of the eternal scope of the Torah heritage. That comes through intense Torah learning - what in our generation would be Torah study and performance of Mitzvot. Something common to all.

Nevertheless, all that is not enough for 'You may pass into the covenant'. That has to be voluntary and in the singular - L'OVRECHA. Every person should have a moment of truth where he or she feels part of the Torah nation not by reason of birth, nor education, but through conviction and personal experience of G-d. That is the point of 'passing into the covenant'. And that is written in the singular because each person's path to that end is very different... and must be respected. 🌱📖