

## Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech – The Power of Achdus – Yitzchak Landau (reprint)

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Parshas Nitzavim always falls during the period of selichos, albeit this year coming on the eve of the commencement of selichos for Ashkenazim. As such, it is most appropriate that the central theme of the sidrah is teshuva and how, if we would only change our ways and return to Hashem, He will forgive our aveiros and end our golus.

The pesukim in the middle of this parsha give us a glimpse as to how our eventual redemption will occur. In פרק ל פסוקים ג-ד, the Torah states

וְשָׁב ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ אֶת-שְׁבוּתֵנוּ, וְרָחֵם; וְשָׁב, וְקִבְּצָנוּ מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים, אֲשֶׁר הִפְצֵנוּ ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ, שָׁמָּה.  
אִם-יִהְיֶה גִדּוּל, בְּקֶצֶה הַשָּׁמַיִם--מִשָּׁם, יִקְבְּצֵנוּ ה' אֶלְקֵינוּ, וּמִשָּׁם, יִקְחֵנוּ.

*"Then Hashem your G-d will bring you back from your captivity and have mercy upon you, and He will gather you in from all the people to which Hashem has scattered you. If you will be pushed to the ends of the earth, from there Hashem will gather you and from there He will take you."*

These pesukim discuss how Hashem will gather in to Him all the B'nei Yisroel, from one end of the earth to the other when they do teshuva. In Possuk 4 however, in addition to the expression "מִשָּׁם יִקְבְּצֵנוּ" – from there He will gather you, which is also used in Possuk 3, the Torah also uses a second expression, "וּמִשָּׁם יִקְחֵנוּ" – and from there He will take you. Why do we need two similar expressions and what can we learn from this?

The Sefer Zera Shimshon (R' Shimshon Chaim Nachmani 1707-1779) answers that the reason the B'nei Yisroel were originally sent into golus was because of the lack of love between fellow Jews; in other words, we were not united as one. Therefore, in order to end this golus, the first thing Hashem will do is to "gather" us together, to make us recognise how pointless arguments and internal fighting isn't helping us at all; in fact, quite the contrary. Only after the B'nei Yisroel are at peace with EACH OTHER and united as they should be, will Hashem "take" us and finally end our golus.

We find another example of this in the Purim story when Homon, in introducing his evil plan to annihilate the Jewish Nation, prefaced his words to King Achashverosh with the expression "there is one nation that is SPREAD OUT AND SEPARATED" R' Shlomo Alkabetz brings other meforshim who explain these words to mean that the Jewish people were not *united* and that this was why Homon knew that his evil plan had a chance of working.

He adds that Esther also realised this and that is why, when she agreed to enter the king's palace without being invited, she first told Mordechai "Go and GATHER the Jews" (Perek 4, Possuk 16), in other words, bring them together as one. Only once they were united would they have a chance to be redeemed. Esther was only confident in her mission once she knew that the Jews would come together and daven and fast in order to be saved from Homon's decree.

As a direct result of this achdus, shortly after their victory against Homon, the B'nei Yisroel were zoche to build the second Beis Hamikdosh where Hashem could again dwell amongst them.

It is only a small step to transcribe these ideas to our own generation. The past year in particular has been a difficult one for the Jewish people; we see and hear with our own eyes and ears the relentless demonization of our nation to the exclusion of all others, sometimes disguised, but often quite blatant, in ways we all thought were more reminiscent of a bygone era. And yet, if we look a little closer, it is not hard to detect Hashem's Hand at work here. It is always a dangerous thing to "second guess" Hashem's reasons but, at the same time, we have a duty to try to learn from what is happening around us and, perhaps, if we are able to take the correct lessons from doing so, such an exercise can be justified.

When 3 young yeshiva bochurim HY'D were kidnapped and their fate remained uncertain, Jewish people of all sectors of the nation came together to daven for their yeshua. Tragically, the desired outcome was not to be, but Chazal teach us that our tefillos are never wasted. Moreover, the defining feature of these tefillos, as well as those subsequent tefillos said throughout the Jewish world during the war which followed, was undoubtedly the atmosphere of tremendous achdus among Jews of all ends of the religious spectrum. Who is to say therefore that it was not this achdus which led to the remarkable successes and miracles we all saw and read about over these past two or three months.

If we stop to consider all this for just a moment, it is clear that Hashem is pleading with us, so to speak, to see what the power of achdus can achieve. The first words of the parsha are "You stand here today all of you". Many meforshim comment that with these words, Moshe was telling the B'nei Yisroel that in order to be "standing" i.e. surviving, the nation has to be "all of you" i.e. united as one.

In these days leading up to Rosh Hashana when we have unprecedented access to Hashem, we need to internalise this message if we really want our long golus to end and for the Beis Hamikdosh to be rebuilt. As in the story of Esther mentioned above, we need to remember that the key to our redemption is our achdus and, conversely, it is the many disputes which, sadly, are rife among us, which are keeping us exiled longer than necessary. If we can make it our goal to ensure that we are united as one and we daven to Hashem with ONE voice, it will be as though He will have no choice but to bring Moshiach and end our golus.