

א ביסל תורה!

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כ"ד אלול תשפ"ד · נצבים-וילך

Struggling With Judaism in the Desert

By Deena Levin '25

Being a Jew in the modern world can be hard. On one hand, we know that we are obligated to follow the *תורה* fully. On the other hand, this can be a struggle when we are so often presented with clashes between *תורה* values and the values of the culture around us.

Apparently, according to *פרשת נצבים*, this is an age-old struggle. After leaving *מצרים*, the new generation of *עם ישראל* is reminded of the covenant we have with *ה'*, that we have to follow for all generations to come. This is explained by the following *פסוק*:

כִּי־אַתֶּם יָדַעְתֶּם אֶת אֲשֶׁר־יִשְׁכְּנוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר־עֲבַרְתֶּם בְּקִרְבָּהּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר עֲבַרְתֶּם: וְתִרְאוּ אֶת־שִׁקּוּצֵיהֶם וְאֶת גִּלְלֵיהֶם עַץ וְאֶבֶן כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב אֲשֶׁר עִמָּהֶם: פְּרִי־שֵׁשׁ בָּכֶם אִישׁ אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אוֹ מִשְׁפָּחָהּ אוֹ־נֶשֶׁכֶּת אֲשֶׁר לָבָּא בָּנָה הַיּוֹם מֵעַם ה' אֲלֵקִינוּ לָלֶכֶת לַעֲבֹד אֶת־אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם פְּרִי־שֵׁשׁ בָּכֶם עוֹשֵׂשׁ פְּרָה רָאשׁ וְלַעֲנָה:

"You know that we dwelt in the land of *מצרים* and we passed through various nations. And you have seen their detestable things and the fetishes of wood and stone, silver and gold that they kept. Lest you have in you, man or woman or family or tribe, that your hearts are directed from *ה'* and go worship the nations' gods, lest there is within you a stock sprouting poison weed and wormwood." (*דברים כ"ט:ו-ז*)

משה recognizes that while *בני ישראל* were passing through the desert, they saw many other cultures who practically worshiped their material possessions. He even recognizes that within the group, there would be

some people who quietly picked up those habits and were beginning to turn away from *ה'*. The next *פסוקים* detail the punishments that *ה'* would give anyone who did follow them and turn away from *ה'*. They will be singled out and destroyed.

When we hear these punishments, they can feel severe and scary. It's easy to think that these *פסוקים* come to teach us that we must obey or we too will get punished. This approach isn't always effective, though. When we look back at a few *פסוקים*, we actually see a really interesting line:

וְלֹא אִתְּכֶם לְבַדְכֶם אֲנֹכִי כֹרֵת אֶת־הַבְרִית הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֹּאת: כִּי אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁנֶה פֹה עִמָּנוּ עַמֹּד הַיּוֹם לִפְנֵי ה' אֲלֵקִינוּ וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר אֵינֶנּוּ פֹה עִמָּנוּ הַיּוֹם:

"Not with you alone do I make this covenant, with its sanctions, with both everyone who stands here today, and everyone who is not here today." (*דברים כ"ט*)

רש"י explains that the people who are "not there" refers to the future generations to come.

It's an interesting thought, to think that even the Jews who had the privilege to stand before *רבינו משה* struggled with some of the same things we do today. More interesting, though, is to know that despite how severe the punishments were, we still have a strong nation standing today. The values of the world around us, after 3,500 years, have still not wiped us out. And, as the month of *אלול* comes to a close, we can do *תשובה* more sincerely with the knowledge that as long as we stay true to our Judaism, we are not alone—we never have been, and never will be.

The Selflessness of a Leader

By Yonatan Naggar '25

In this week's פרשה we are going to be reading נצבים-וילך. The death of משה רבינו occurs at the end of this week's פרשה. At the beginning of וילך it says "וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל" "וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל." The Ramban says that when משה finished speaking, all the people who stood before him returned to their tents. Why was it necessary for it to be mentioned that after משה spoke they all went back to their tents since it previously said "אָתָּם נֹצְבִים הַיּוֹם כְּלֶכֶם לִפְנֵי ה'" "אָתָּם נֹצְבִים הַיּוֹם כְּלֶכֶם לִפְנֵי ה'" "אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְגו'" "לְעִבְרָךְ בְּבְרִית ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ, וְאַחֲרָם עֲבָרָם בְּבְרִית יְלֹכּוּ מִפְּנֵי" "It is understood that after heading into the ברית they would go away from משה." It then says that משה went to the camp of the לויים then to the camp of the ישראלים to show them כבוד. This is similar to someone who wants to take leave of a friend and is coming to ask for permission.

The ספורנו says that "וילך משה" is saying that משה was self-propelled, just like Amram (the father of משה) who married Yocheved. Another time the word וילך is used it has the meaning of a person who is described acting on their own initiative like it is earlier in the book of דברים (י"ז:ג') where a Jewish idolater had not been seduced by anyone. After the matter was concluded between the ברית of ה' and this second generation of בני ישראל, many of whom were not born at the time of משה, יציאת מצרים, משה comforts them before his upcoming death. He does this so that the joy they will have with ה' after concluding the ברית is not turned into sorrow and sadness over his impending death. Being happy for something like being fit to be part of a ברית is something natural. In תהילים (קמט:ב), תהילים (קמט:ב) it talks about בני ישראל rejoicing along with their relationship with ה'. Being in the presence of ה' is an

amazing experience, and so is giving קרבנות. We see this in דברים (כ"ז:ז'), which is the occasion where the stones being erected were marked after successfully crossing the ירדן.

The idea of the אבן עזרא is that "וילך משה" means that משה went to every tribe telling them that he was about to die and that they should not fear. He strengthened them with his words to יהושוע. It later says "וְאַתָּה תְּנַחֲלֶנָּה אִתָּם". Meaning that משה gave each of the tribes a ברכה. Even though the ברכות are recorded later in the book.

The main takeaway from this idea is how great of a leader and how selfless משה was. He did not want his upcoming death to be a distraction for בני ישראל, and was there to comfort them and give them ברכות. He always made it about the nation even in a time when it could have been completely about him.



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