



You Are All Standing Today before Hashem Your G-d

Parshas Nitzavim Is the Sixth Parsha that Begins with the Letter Aleph It Mitigates the Six Names of Elokim prior to the Day of Judgment

In honor of the upcoming Shabbas Kodesh, it is appropriate to establish a connection between the two parshiyos we will read this Shabbas—Nitzavim and Vayeilech. Let us begin with the opening passuk of parshas Nitzavim (Devarim 29, 9): **“אתם נצבים היום—כולכם לפני ה' אלקיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושוטריכם כל איש ישראל—you are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d: Your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers—all the men of Yisrael.** After explaining the simple meaning of the passage, Rashi comments (ibid. 12) in the name of an aggadic Midrash:

Why was the passage beginning “אתם נצבים” juxtaposed with the klalos (curses)? Because Yisrael had heard one hundred klalos minus two, besides the forty-nine in Toras Kohanim (sefer Vayikra). Their faces turned pallid, and they said, “Who can bear these?” Moshe began to console them: “You are standing here today.” Although you have caused much anger to the Omnipresent, nevertheless He has not annihilated you; and behold, you exist before Him.

Indeed, the commentaries find this perplexing, and much has been written concerning Moshe's attempt to console the people. On the one hand, if they deserved to be punished by HKB”H with these curses, it is surprising that they weren't punished. Unquestionably, Moshe would not console them by telling them that HKB”H did not intend to fulfill what He had written in His holy Torah. On the other hand, if they did not sin to the point that they deserved these curses as punishment, then how could Moshe console

them with the words: **“Although you have caused the Omnipresent much anger, nevertheless He has not annihilated you”?** They were not punished, because they had not transgressed to that degree.

Parshas Nitzavim Separates the Body of Curses and Rosh HaShanah

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by referring to the writings of the Tur and the “michaber” (the author of the Shulchan Aruch) (O.C. 428, 4). They inform us that Parshas Nitzavim is read annually prior to Rosh HaShanah. The source for this practice is the Gemara (Megillah 31b). It states that Ezra HaSofer instituted the practice of reading the klalos in parshas Ki Savo prior to Rosh HaShanah: **“כדי שתכלה השנה—וקלותיה—so that the year should end along with its curses.** Tosafos (ibid.) add that we also read parshas Nitzavim prior to Rosh HaShanah: **Because we want to create an interruption by reading one parsha, on the Shabbas prior to Rosh HaShanah, that does not contain any curses; so that the curses will not be associated with Rosh HaShanah.**

We will now interject a pleasant tidbit of our own. It is for this reason that HKB”H, the Giver of the Torah, began this parsha with the passuk: **“אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני ה' אלקיכם.”** Many of our sacred sefarim—including the Zera Kodesh, the Ohr HaMeir, the Arvei Nachal, the Maor V'Shemesh, the Tiferes Shlomo, the Yismach Moshe, and others—write that in this passuk, HKB”H alludes to Rosh HaShanah. This concurs with the interpretation of the Zohar hakadosh (Bo 32b) regarding the passuk (Iyov 1, 6): **“ויהי היום ויבואו בני האלהים להתייצב על ה' ויבוא גם השטן”**

בתוכם—it happened one day; the angels came to stand before Hashem, and the Satan, too, came among them.” The Zohar interprets **”היום”—“the day”—as a reference to Rosh HaShanah, the day on which HKB”H stands in judgment of the world.** It interprets **”בני האלהים”—the sons of G-d—**as the prosecuting angels, who are joined by the Satan, to accuse Yisrael of wrongdoing.

On this special day, HKB”H, King of the Universe, sits on the throne of judgment to judge all of mankind, as we have learned in the Mishnah (R.H. 16a): **”בראש”** **”השנה כל באי עולם עוברים לפניו כבני מרון”—on Rosh HaShanah, all of creation pass before Him like sheep.** On this day, **”היום,”** namely Rosh HaShanah, all of creation stand (**”נצבים”**) before HKB”H and are held accountable for all of their actions. This concludes his remarks.

Now, recall that Tosafos taught us that we always read parshas Nitzavim prior to Rosh HaShanah in order to create a separation between the klalos in parshas Ki Savo and Rosh HaShanah. Accordingly, we can suggest that this is why HKB”H opened parshas Nitzavim with the passuk: **”You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d”—**where **”today”** alludes to Rosh HaShanah, the day on which all of creation stands before HKB”H in judgment. He is informing us of the tremendous chesed He is performing on our behalf. HKB”H placed parshas Nitzavim precisely in this spot in Torah she'b'chsav to create a separation between the klalos in parshas Ki Savo and Rosh HaShanah.

Furthermore, this enlightens us as to Moshe Rabeinu’s words of consolation to Yisrael. After hearing the **”tochachah”—**the litany of curses—in parshas Ki Savo, the people turned pale with fear, and said: **”Who can withstand these?”** Moshe began to appease them: **”You are standing here today (”היום”). Although you have angered Him immensely, the Omnipresent has chosen not to eliminate you. Lo and behold! You still exist before Him.”** In other words, it should be apparent to you that HKB”H added an entire parsha, parshas Nitzavim, in order to create a separation between the body of curses and Rosh HaShanah.

For this very reason, He began the parsha with the words: **”אתם נצבים היום,”** indicating the reason He

inserted this parsha as a separation: Because on Rosh HaShanah, **”היום,”** you are to stand in judgment before HKB”H. Hence, He did not want to juxtapose the klalos with Rosh HaShanah. This should serve as proof to you that HKB”H does not wish to punish you with these terrible curses. On the contrary, due to His infinite mercy, He placed an iron curtain, so to speak, between the klalos in parshas Ki Savo and Rosh HaShanah.

Now, however, it behooves us to explain the practical significance of this barrier for each and every one of us. What benefit is it to us to have parshas Nitzavim separate between the curses in parshas Ki Savo and Rosh HaShanah? How does this separation negate these dreadful curses, which HKB”H promised to visit upon Yisrael, chas v’shalom, if they failed to abide by the precepts of the Torah?

Before addressing this question, let us examine the first passuk in parshas Vayeilech (ibid. 31, 1): **”וילך משה—****Moshe went and spoke these words to all of Yisrael.** It does not say where he went. The Targum YoNasan asserts: **”וואזל משה למשכן—****Moshe went to the designated house of study.** In Aramaic, a Beis Midrash is called a **”בית”** **”אולפנא”—**a place where Torah is studied.

This, too, requires further clarification. Why did Moshe Rabeinu see fit to go to the Beis Midrash on the day of his passing to address all of Yisrael? Perhaps, this was his usual, sacred way of addressing Yisrael—specifically from a place of Torah-study. But if that was the case, then why did the Torah see fit to reveal this to us specifically here with the words **”וילך משה?”** We will also explain why the Targum opted to refer to a Beis Midrash as **”בית אולפנא”** (a study-hall) rather than **”בית מדרשא”**.

It Is Possible to Attain Wisdom from the Six Parshiyos that Begin with the Letter Aleph

We will begin to shed some light on all of these issues by introducing what the Bnei Yissaschar writes (Sivan 5, 12) with regard to the passuk (Iyov 33, 33): **”וואאלפך—****and I will teach you wisdom.** These two words allude to that which is brought down by the great Gaon Chida in Dvash L’Fee in the name of the Binat Yissaschar authored by the great Rabbi Yissaschar Ber Bloch, ztz”l.

They point out that there are six parshiyos in the Torah that begin with the letter **"aleph."**

They are as follows: (1) Parshas Noach begins (Bereishis 6, 9): "אלה תולדות נח". (2) Parshas Pekudei begins (Shemos 38, 21): "אלה פקודי המשכן". (3) Parshas Bechukosai begins (Vayikra 26, 3): "אם בחוקתי תלכו". (4) Parshas Masei begins (Bamidbar 33, 1): "אלה מסעי בני ישראל". (5) Parshas Devarim begins (Devarim 1, 1): "אלה הדברים אשר דיבר משה אל כל ישראל". (6) Parshas Nitzavim begins (ibid. 29, 9): "אתם נצבים היום כולכם לפני ה' אלקיכם".

According to the Binat Yissachar, these six parshiyos beginning with the letter **"aleph"** allude to the six orders of the Mishnah—טהרות, קדשים, נזיקין, קדשים, טהרות— that teach Yisrael how to use the "Thirteen Hermeneutic Principles" to elucidate and interpret Torah she'b'chsav. By applying them properly, we learn how to fulfill all the mitzvos presented in Torah she'b'chsav precisely and correctly.

He also adds another fascinating point. The full spelling of the letter **"aleph"** is "אלף"; this is the same spelling as the Hebrew word for one thousand— "אלף". Thus, he contends that these six parshiyos allude to the six thousand years of the existence of the world. As the Gemara teaches (R.H. 31a): "שיתא אלפי שני הוה—**the existence of the world is six thousand years**". He goes on to explain how each one of these six parshiyos alludes to a particular millennium. Based on this understanding, the Bnei Yissaschar concludes: "זוהו שיש לרמוז ו'אלפך חכמה, ו' אלפין שהם ראשי סדרין בתורה, יש לך ללמוד מהן חכמה, ולא דבר ריק הוא ולא במקרה הוא—**thus, we can allude the following from the words "ואלפך חכמה". We are to attain "chochmah" from the "vav" (six) "alephs" that are the first letters of these parshiyos of the Torah. This is not meaningless, and it is not a mere coincidence!**

These Six Parshiyos Are a Tikun for the Sale of Yosef

Since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, I would like to propose my own explanation regarding the significance of these six parshiyos beginning with the letter **"aleph."** We will refer to what the shevatim said to each other after the sale of Yosef (Bereishis 42, 21): "ויאמרו איש אל אחיו אבל אשמים"

אנחנו, על אחינו אשר ראינו צרת נפשו בהתחננו אלינו ולא שמענו, על כן באה אלינו. הצרה הזאת." They then said to one another, **"Indeed, we are guilty concerning our brother inasmuch as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us, and we did not listen; that is why this trouble has befallen us."**

The Shela hakadosh (Mikeitz) notes that six consecutive words beginning with the letter **"aleph"** are mentioned in this passuk: "איש אל אחיו אבל אשמים". He claims that this alludes to the fact that due to our countless sins, the yetzer hara prevails over us during the six thousand— "ששת אלפים" --years of the world's existence. The Megaleh Amukos (Vayigash), however, explains the six "alephs" in this passuk somewhat differently. He refers to a Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Mishlei 929) related to the ten martyrs: "אמר רב יהודה, לא נמסרו הרוגים למלכות אלא על מכירתו של יוסף. אמר רבי אבין, הרי אומר עשרה, עשרה כל דור ודור, ועדיין אותו חטא תלוי." The message of the Midrash is terrible and shocking. Rav Yehudah says that the ten martyrs were killed on account of "mechiras Yosef." Then Rabbi Avin says: So, too, in every generation, ten martyrs die as a consequence of the sale of Yosef; that sin still hangs over us.

Accordingly, the Shela hakadosh asserts that this is the allusion inherent in the passuk chronicling the remorse of the shevatim after the sale of their brother. The six consecutive words beginning with the letter **"aleph"**— איש אל אחיו אבל אשמים אנחנו — allude to the fact that the sin of Yosef continues to haunt us throughout the six thousand years of this world's existence. In fact, it alludes the cause of the churban of the Beis HaMikdash—"sin'as chinam." After all, the underlying motive for the sale of Yosef was the baseless hatred that had evolved between the brothers. Clearly, this deleterious tendency persists among us today.

"Mechiras Yosef" Damaged the Six Names of Havaya—the Gematria of וס"ף

Here the Avodas Yisrael writes something fantastic concerning the six consecutive words beginning with the letter "aleph": "איש אל אחיו אבל אשמים אנחנו". As we know, Yosef HaTzaddik merited being the paradigm of the midah of "yesod tzaddik"—the sixth midah, encompassing all of the other six midos: **chesed,**

gevurah, Tiferes, netzach, hod, and yesod. In fact, this is alluded to by the name יוֹסֵף (156), whose gematria equals six times the name **Havaya** (26), corresponding to those six midos. Therefore, when the shevatim sold Yosef, they damaged those six **Havayas**.

In this vein, the Avodas Yisrael explains the significance of the six consecutive **"alephs"** in the passuk. As we know, the letter א is made up of the three letters יו"י. There is a **"yud"** at its upper right; a diagonal **"vav"** in the middle; and a **"yud"** at its bottom left. The gematria of these three letters equals the gematria of the name **Havaya** (26). Hence, the six **"alephs"** in the passuk represent the six **Havayas** that they had to rectify for the sin of "mechiras Yosef."

The Intriguing Teaching of the Pnei Yehoshua concerning the Six Courts Associated with the Six Names of Elokim

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, with the utmost respect and devotion, I would like to embellish the idea of the Avodas Yisrael related to the six "alephs" in the passuk after the cheit of "mechiras Yosef." We will begin by presenting a precious teaching from the Pnei Yehoshua (Berachos 32a). In his own, sacred way, he interprets the passuk in parshas Va'etchanan (Devarim 3, 23): **"ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההיא לאמר: I implored Hashem at that time, saying."** In the Midrash (D.R. 11, 10): **How do we know that Moshe prayed 515 times at that juncture? Since it says, "ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההיא לאמר"; that is the gematria of ואתחנן.**

The great Pnei Yehoshua writes: **This is the implication of the passuk** (ibid. 26): **"Enough! Do not continue to speak to Me further . . ."** **Had Moshe prayed one more tefilah which would have brought the total to 516, equaling six times the numerical value of אלהים, he would have mitigated the six courts mentioned in the chapter of במה** "במה" (Maseches Shabbas), **and his tefilah would have been answered. Therefore, He said to him, "Do not continue to speak to me further . . ."**

To gain a better understanding of his sacred words we will refer to the harsh nevuah of Yechezkel HaNavi presented at the time of the churban. He foresaw that HKB"H had commanded the angels of destruction to

punish Yisrael for their sins (Yechezkel 9, 1): **"ויקרא באזני" קול גדול לאמר קרבו פקדות העיר ואיש כלי משחתו בידו, והנה ששה אנשים באים מדרך שער העליון אשר מפנה צפונה ואיש כלי מפצו בידו... ולא להאמר באזני עברו. בעיר אחריו והכו אל תחס עינכם ואל תחמלו."** **He then called within my earshot with a loud voice, saying, "Bring near those appointed over the city, each with his weapon of destruction in his hand." And behold, six men were coming from the direction of the Upper Gate that faces northward, each man with his sledgehammer in his hand . . . Then He said to those within my earshot, "Pass through the city behind him and smite; let your eye not spare and do not have compassion."**

The Gemara cited by the Pnei Yehoshua explains (Shabbas 55a): **"ומאן נינהו ששה אנשים, אמר רב חסדא, קצף, אף, וחימה, —and who were these six men? Rav Chisda said: They were Fury, Anger and Wrath, Destroyer and Breaker and Exterminator.** This teaches us that six courthouses exist for the purpose of punishing the sinner. They exacted punishment from the sinners of Yisrael during the times of the first Beis HaMikdash. According to the Pnei Yehoshua, these six groups of angels of destruction correspond to these six courthouses — which in turn represent six aspects of the name Elokim, the name of judgment.

Now, six times the numerical value of Elokim (86) equals 516. This explains why Moshe intended to implore HKB"H with 516 tefilos; he intended to mitigate and nullify the decrees of these six courts corresponding to six times the name of judgment—אלהים. After completing 515 tefilos—the numerical value of ואתחנן—he intended to add one more tefilah to complete the desired complement of 516 tefilos. However, Moshe was admonished by HKB"H: **"It is too much for you! (Enough!) Do not continue to speak to Me further concerning this matter."** In other words, HKB"H informed him that the time to abolish the six courts associated with six times Elokim had not yet arrived; therefore, he should desist from davening one more tefilah.

The Sin of Mechiras Yosef Evoked the Six Courts

Following this line of reasoning, we will now proceed to explain the significance of the six consecutive

words beginning with the letter **"aleph"** in the passuk chronicling the reaction of the shevatim after the cheit of "mechiras Yosef": **וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל אֶחָיו אֲכַל אֶשְׁמִימִים** **"אִנְחָנוּ"**. They expressed their remorse for not being sensitive to their brother's suffering and pleas. Now, we presented the wonderful explanation of the Avodas Yisrael above. He explained that by selling Yosef, they damaged the six **Havayas**—the numerical equivalent of **י"ס**. We learned that the letter **"aleph"** is formed by two **"yuds"** and a **"vav,"** whose sum equals the gematria of **Havaya**. Thus, six **"alephs"** represent six **Havayas**.

We will explain the matter in keeping with our current discussion. Yosef was the paradigm of the midah of "tzaddik yesod olam." As such, with the six **Havayas** contained in his name, he was capable of mitigating the six courts of judgment associated with six times **Elokim**, so that they would not control the world. However, as a consequence of the sin of "mechiras Yosef," the six **"alephs"** were damaged. Therefore, the six courts of judgment emanating from the six times **Elokim** were elicited to atone for the damage to these six **"alephs."**

This explains magnificently Yosef's pronouncement to his brothers after their father's demise (Bereishis 50, 19): **וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם יוֹסֵף אַל תִּירְאוּ כִּי הִתַּחַת אֲלֵקִים אֲנִי, וְאַתֶּם חֲשַׁבְתֶּם** **"But Yosef said to them, "Fear not, for am I instead of G-d? Although you intended me harm, G-d intended it for good . . . in order to keep a vast nation alive."** Yosef wanted to convince them that his intentions all along were good; he meant to mitigate the forces of "din" from the six times Elokim that they had provoked. As our sacred sefarim explain, this was why he pretended to accuse them of being spies; he wanted them to achieve atonement by suffering for having sold him into slavery.

This then is the underlying message conveyed by his pronouncement: **"Fear not, for am I instead of G-d?!** Do you think that I intend to punish you in place of the six courts from the six times Elokim? On the contrary, my very name **י"ס** equals six times **Havaya**; it signifies my sincere desire to evoke divine mercy and mitigate those six forces of "din." **"Although you**

intended me harm, G-d intended it for good, in order to preserve the lives of this great nation."

With this in mind, I would like to propose a novel idea with the help of the blessed Almighty. HKB"H in His infinite mercy and kindness inserted these six parshiyos beginning with the letter **"aleph"** into the Torah to mitigate the six courts of "din" emanating from six times **אלקים** that all begin with **"aleph"** that were evoked by the sin of "mechiras Yosef." Instead of demonstrating unity like the letter **"aleph,"** they demonstrated disunity and discord.

The Tikun of Jewish Unity Is Alluded to in Parshas Nitzavim

We can now suggest a reasonable and pleasing conclusion. This week's parsha, parshas Nitzavim, is the sixth of the parshiyos of the Torah that begin with the letter **"aleph"** — **"אתם נצבים היום"**. Thus, it completes the process of mitigating the forces associated with six times **Elokim**. In this parsha, we find an allusion to the need for all factions of Yisrael to be thoroughly united in order to make amends for the sin of "mechiras Yosef" that will continue to haunt us throughout the six thousand years of the world's existence.

It is precisely for this reason that all the different factions of Yisrael are enumerated at the beginning of the parsha: **"You are standing today, all of you, before Hashem, your G-d: Your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers—all the men of Yisrael; your small children, your women, and your convert who is in the midst of your camp, from the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water."** The Midrash Tanchuma (Nitzavim 2) teaches that Moshe Rabeinu was admonishing them and stressing the importance of unity among all the factions of Yisrael:

"אתם נצבים היום, מה היום מאיר פעמים ומאפיל פעמים, אף אתם כשאפלה לכם עתיד להאיר לכם אור עולם, שנאמר והיה לך ה' לאור עולם, אימתי בזמן שתהיו כולכם אגודה אחת, שנאמר חיים כולכם היום. בנוהג שבעולם אם נוטל אדם אגודה של קנים, שמא יכול לשברם בכת אחת, ואילו נוטל אחת אחת, אפילו תינוק משברן. וכן את מוצא שאין ישראל נגאלין עד שיהיו כולן אגודה אחת, שנאמר בימים ההמה ובעת ההיא נאום ה' יבואו בני ישראל ובני יהודה יחדיו וגו', כשהן אגודים מקבלין פני שכינה."

“You are standing today.” Just as the day (“היום”) is sometimes bright and shiny; sometimes it is dark and overcast. The same applies to you (Yisrael); although it may be dark and dismal for you, He is going to brighten things up for you with an eternal light. As it states (Yeshayah 60, 19): “Hashem will be an eternal light for you.” When will this happen? When you will all be one unified group. As it states (Devarim 4, 4): “You are all alive today.” It is the nature of the world that if a person takes a group of reeds, perhaps he will be able to break them with one stroke! Whereas if he takes them one by one, even an infant can break them. So, too, you find that Yisrael will not be redeemed until they became one unified group, as it states (Yirmiyah 50, 4): “‘In those days and at that time,’ says the Lord, ‘the children of Yisrael, they and the children of Yehudah, will come together, etc.’” When they are united, they will welcome the face of the Shechinah.

We can now appreciate the moral support and encouragement Moshe Rabeinu offered Yisrael. After hearing the litany of klalos in parshas Ki Savo, they were devastated and turned pale with fear. They said: **“Who can withstand these?” Moshe began to appease them: “You are standing here today. Although you have angered the Omnipresent immensely, He has chosen not to eliminate you. Lo and behold! You still exist before Him.”**

Moshe Rabeinu proved this to them with the fact that HKB”H interrupted between the klalos in parshas Ki Savo and Rosh HaShanah. He did so with parshas Nitzavim, the sixth parsha in the Torah beginning with

the letter **“aleph.”** These six parshiyos are designed to mollify and mitigate the six courts of judgment associated with the six names of Elokim. They are responsible for imposing the harsh punishments on Yisrael. Nevertheless, to mitigate them, it is necessary for all of Yisrael to unite as one, as per the passuk: **“You are all standing today before Hashem, your G-d!”** In fact, this is a fantastic preparation to mitigate the judgment of Rosh HaShanah and prompt HKB”H to rise from the throne of judgment and move over to sit on the throne of “rachamim.”

Following this sublime path, we will now revisit the passuk in parshas Vayeilech: **“ויילך משה וידבר את הדברים האלה—אל כל ישראל—Moshe went and spoke these words to all of Yisrael.** The Targum YoNasan comments: **Moshe went to the Beis Midrash,** which is called a **“בית אולפנא”** in Aramaic—a place where Torah is studied. We can suggest that by doing so, Moshe Rabeinu conveyed a vital message to them: He himself did not complete the mitigation of the six times **Elokim**, because HKB”H stopped him from praying the last tefilah, number **516**, the numerical equivalent of six times **Elokim** (86). Notwithstanding, every Jew possesses the capacity to accomplish this feat by going to the Beis Midrash to study Torah, which contains six parshiyos beginning with the letter **“aleph.”** This phenomenon alludes to the fact that with the kedushah of the Torah, it is possible to mitigate all of the six courts of judgment. Therefore, a Beis Midrash is called **“בית אולפנא”** in Aramaic, because it possesses the power to mitigate the six **“alephs”** that represent the six courts of judgment that were evoked by the cheit of **“mechiras Yosef.”**

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