

סעודת שלישית

Introduction: This is the last edition of Seudat Shlishit-To-Go prior to Rosh Hashanah and it is amazing to think that for the past six months this has been our format for learning together each Shabbat. We firmly believe that **ישועת ה כהרף עיין** (meaning that Hashem can provide salvation in an instant) so while I enjoy analyzing the parsha collectively anyway that we can, I do hope that somehow our situation will be miraculously transformed and next year we will study together in person.

Our double parsha this week, Parshat Nitzavim-Vayalech, may be small in its quantity of psukim, but it nonetheless has an important message that we need to reflect upon. There will be two related questions this week, with two answers to our queries.

#1 Parshat Nitzavim essentially is a reiteration of the brit (the covenant) that exists between Hakadosh Baruch Hu and the Jewish people which leads to the clear first question: Why is it necessary to repeat, one more time, the existence of this relationship? Were Am Yisrael unaware of this brit; was anything new being added?

#2 The opening of the parsha goes out of its way to note that all members of Bnei Yisrael were present at this moment, even describing the different categories of individuals who were there. Isn't that point obvious; why would we think that anyone was absent? Could not this idea have been expressed more succinctly?

Answer: It is my hope, as always, that people come up with their own original solutions to these questions, but I will present two suggestions to our dilemmas. The Rav (Rav Soloveitchik) observed that indeed the nations' brit with Hashem is eternal and does not to be reissued. However, Moshe's message in this parsha is that each individual member of Am Yisrael must decide on his/her own to be part of the covenant for it to truly have meaning. That is the why the Torah stresses that everyone, from all walks of life, was there because each person had to make that choice independently.

A second solution is to note that indeed this issuing of the brit does contain a new element – the powerful concept of teshuva (repentance/return) – and that innovation was so significant that it merited listing, once more, the covenant that we enjoy with our Creator. Since there was a different aspect to this iteration it was critical to note that everyone was present.

Both messages are incredibly timely as we stand a week away from Rosh Hashanah. We must appreciate the fact that Hashem has created the novel idea of teshuva, where we can genuinely repent and not be punished for our actions, and we need to realize that each one of us individually must personally reaffirm our brit with Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

May everyone be blessed with a ketiva v'chatima tova.