

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 23 Elul 5786,
corresponding to September 5, 2026.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 878 Hz) (p. 1138 S) (p. 786 Hi) (p. 1086 AS)

NETZAVIM-VAYEILECH ניצבים-וילך

Deuteronomy 29:9

Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED)

1. Moshe assembled all the people. The Torah identifies several levels of people, rich and poor, leaders and followers, from each strata of society. The Kli Yakar (Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz, 1550-1619, Prague) states that this was done to level the playing field. In Hashem's eyes, each person is treated equally. Hashem will not favor any person. Each will be judged by his own performance. Right now we are all equal. Another commentator stated that each person really wanted to be a leader, but right now we are all equal in Hashem's eyes.

2. There are two Toch'chahs. Hashem admonished us at the end of Chumash Vayikra, a composition that comprised 49 curses for disobedience. Now at the end of Devarim comes a harsher description, with 98 curses for disobedience. The Midrash stated that the people were quite shaken at the end of the later Admonition and not so much at the end of the first one. Most commentators point out that the difference was not because of the number of curses. Rather it was because in the first Toch'chah, the Hebrew was in plural, and each person felt that the curses were not meant for them. But here it was in singular. Each person now felt that Moshe was talking to him. Big difference, and this created a different response.

3. The biggest contribution in this Parshah is the concept of Areivut, co-responsibility. This is an important element, especially in the upcoming holiday of Rosh Hashanah. We are judged on Rosh Hashanah for all our actions...and collectively as well. Individually is obvious and clear. Collectively means that the nation of Israel will be judged. Hence we are responsible not only for our own misdeeds, but also for the misdeeds of all other Jews. Therefore we should be more involved in trying to influence our fellow Jews to observe Torah. This is a task that we should all be involved in. So invite a non-observant Jew to our Shabbat table, to our Sukkah, to a kosher BBQ. Some effort is required.

4. When will the Mashiach come? When will the Final Redemption be experienced! The set time is not revealed to us; not even Moshe Rabbeinu knew. But all of us know that we are able to hasten his arrival. Acts that are hidden from the public eye, but known to Hashem, will not be held against us. But revealed and public acts will be scrutinized by Hashem and be used against us. There are plenty of hidden Jews in the world, hiding their identity from others, and others who aren't even aware that they are Jewish. Therefore there is a need for us to behave publicly as good Jews, good especially in our relationships with non-Jews. And of course there is a need to behave well with fellow Jews. After the Holocaust, there were many Jews who suffered and survived. Some came to America. Due to their suffering, they hid their Judaism from themselves and from their children. They ended up giving Hitler a post-Holocaust victory in destroying a Jewish family.

5. The order in what will occur during the Final Redemption is a matter of debate among the great commentators. According to the Rambam, the first step will be the building of the Holy Temple. Afterward will be the ingathering of the Jews of the Exile. The Chinuch and Maharshah claim that the first step will be the ingathering of the Jews into Eretz Yisrael. According to the Rambam, there will be two acts of the Ingathering. The first will be with the help of the non-Jewish kings and governments of the world. Only after that will there be the final Ingathering, a most larger one. I truly believe that we are experiencing a timely but large Ingathering of Jews to Eretz Yisrael. American Jews have just passed the 100,000 mark of Jews making Aliyah through the Nefesh B'Nefesh organization.

6. When Moshe told Yehoshua "Chazak": Be strong and Courageous (31:7), he was giving him excellent advice. A national leader needs to be strong. Lead with integrity, strength in character, and from decisive decision-making. Yet do not become haughty or egotistical. In the modern period, the real strong leaders are unfortunately exceedingly egotistical and quite pompous. When Yehoshua saw Moshe ending his career in a down note, he saw Moshe not succeed in leading the nation into the Promised Land. And Moshe was predicting that the Jewish people will end up rejecting Hashem and the Torah. As such, Yehoshua did not feel that he would succeed, noting the lack of success in his Rebbe. He probably felt that he would fail as well. Hence Moshe's words to Yehoshua were very well placed.

7. Hashem will punish Bnei Yisrael and no longer protect them from their many enemies. The people will complain that Hashem has abandoned them. Hirsch pointed out that Hashem will abandon the people because Bnei Yisrael rejected Him first, by no longer obeying the Torah. In our day, Bnei Yisrael has overwhelmingly rejected the Torah. The Orthodox Jewish community is less than 10% of the total world Jewish population. In truth, that is a small number. Our devotion to Torah observance is admirable, but it is very small indeed. We need to role model a true Torah lifestyle and hope to increase our numbers in the total community. I pray for our success.

8 MIDRASH. Our Sages teach us that a fetus is taught the Torah while he is in the womb and caused to forget it all when being born. If it is forgotten, then why is it taught to him at all? Rav Soloveitchik commented that there remains within the newborn an intuitive wisdom. If he will eventually study Torah, it won't feel foreign to him. This is what Moshe meant to say when he said that the Torah is really not that distant from him.

QUESTIONS FOR NETZAVIM- VAYEILECH 5786

I. From the Text

1. With whom is Hashem entering into a Covenant? (29:13,14)
2. What sin will be a major difficulty for the nation? (29:17)
3. How old was Moshe when he died? (31:2)
4. What are the last two Mitzvot of the 613 Mitzvot in the Torah? (31:12 and (31:19)
5. Who are the witnesses to observe the Covenant? (31:28)

II. From Rashi

6. "You are standing TODAY...(29:9). What day was it?
7. Who were the woodcutters among the Jewish people? (29:10)
8. Why were the people obligated to bring the small children to the Hakhel ceremony? (31:12)
9. Where was Moshe's written Sefer Torah stored when he gave it to the Levites? (32:26)
10. Were Bnei Yisrael able to observe the Torah strictly after Moshe died? (31:29)

III. From the Rabbis

11. What is the difference between a Covenant and a Contract? (RED)
12. "And Moshe WENT..." (31:1). Where did he go? (Ramban)
13. Why was Moshe's Torah preserved in the Holy of Holies? (Ramban)

IV. Midrash.

14. What is the real choice between good and bad that is presented to Bnei Yisrael?

V. Haftorah. Isaiah

15. What is the first step of Redemption?

VI. Relationships

16.

- a) Boaz - David
- b) Shem - Asshur
- c) Lemech - Noach
- d) Zilpah - Gad
- e) Elisheva - Nachshon

ANSWERS FOR NETZAVIM-VAYEILECH 5786

1. With the entire Jewish nation and with all their descendants.
2. Idolatry
3. 120 years old.
4. Hakhel and to write a Sefer Torah.
5. Heaven and Earth.
6. The day of Moshe's death.
7. They were Canaanites who were denied conversion by Moshe, but were allowed to stay with the nation as woodcutters.
8. To bring a reward to this parents who brought them.
9. Near the Tablets in the Holy Ark.
10. Only as long as Yehoshua was alive.
11. A Covenant is eternal. A Contract can be broken.
12. He went to bid farewell to each tribe personally.
13. To make sure no one would add or subtract from the Torah.
14. Choosing between Torah and idolatry.
15. The ingathering of all Jews back to Eretz Yisrael.
- 16.
- a) Great Grandfather Boaz
- b) Father Shem
- c) Father Lemech
- d) Mother Zilpah
- e) Siblings