

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 24

Nitzavim, Sicha 1

The Verse:

In his final speech before his passing, Moshe called the people together to initiate a new covenant between them and G-d. “You are all standing this day before your God.... that you may enter the covenant of G-d, your God, and His oath, which G-d, your G-d, is making with you this day, in order to establish you this day as His people, and that He will be your G-d, as He spoke to you, and as He swore to your forefathers to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. (Devarim 29: 9, 11-12)

The Rashi:

In order to establish you this day as His people — He goes to so much trouble here, for the purpose of keeping you, before Him, as His people.

The Question:

What difficulty is there in the straightforward meaning of the verse — that G-d is making a covenant with the Jewish people to be His people — that Rashi is addressing with his comment “He goes to so much trouble here?”

The Explanation:

Rashi is addressing a fundamental issue with the covenant: The verse says that the purpose of this covenant is “to establish you this day as His people.” But that was accomplished at the Giving of the Torah at Sinai where G-d made a covenant with the Jewish people to be His people. What, then, is the purpose of this covenant?

Rashi therefore comments, “He goes to so much trouble here, for the purpose of **keeping you... as His people,**” rendering the word for “establish” as “keeping.” This covenant was not creating the bond between G-d and the Jewish people — that was accomplished at Sinai — it was sealing the bond, confirming that G-d’s earlier covenant would remain and not falter.

But why should this covenant be more secure than the earlier one at Sinai? Rashi addresses this by saying “He goes to so much trouble here,” meaning, G-d went to unusual lengths of effort in this covenant to ensure that the people would remain faithful to Him and to the covenant, so that it would never be broken.

What effort did G-d expend? This covenant had the feature of “passing through.” As Rashi explained earlier, both the Jewish people and G-d, so to speak, passed through a demarcated area to signify their commitment to the covenant. Additionally, G-d attached His curses to this covenant as well, heightening the severity and seriousness of the covenant.

The result of this intensified covenant is alluded to in Rashi’s conclusion, “He goes to so much trouble here, for the purpose of keeping you, **before Him, as His people.**” Rashi adds to the language of the verse which merely said, “as His people,” by saying “before Him.” We can say the Jewish people belong to G-d, yet they can also be distant from Him at the same time. But once G-d has reiterated His covenant here, then the people are “before Him,” always present, never distant.

The Deeper Dimension:

On an earlier verse in Devarim, “This day, you have become a people to G-d, your God,” the Rebbe’s father comments that “this day” alludes to Rosh Hashanah which is also referred to as “this day” in the Mussaf prayers of Rosh Hashanah in the

phrase, “this day is the beginning of Your work.”

He then continues to say that the formation of the Jewish people as a G-d’s nation on Rosh Hashanah is reflected in our verse as well, “in order to establish you today as His people.” In this verse, “today” also refers to Rosh Hashanah. As the Alter Rebbe wrote, every instance of “today” with the definite article “the” (as it appears in this verse), alludes to the first instance of “the day,” the creation of Adam on the very first Rosh Hashanah.

In this explanation, there are two allusions to Rosh Hashanah: 1) In the words “this day,” and; 2) in the word “today” without the preface of “this.” What is the difference between these allusions?

The word “this” can only be said about something which is plainly obvious and evident, that we can point to and say “this.” The souls of the Jewish people have the ability to perceive G-d in this tangible fashion, to say “this.” On Rosh Hashanah, this capacity for clear revelation of G-d within the soul is renewed. It is this dimension of Rosh Hashanah that is alluded to in the phrase “this day.”

When the word “today” is used to allude to Rosh Hashanah, we are referring to a different aspect of renewal — the creation of the material world which does not easily disclose G-d’s presence, so we cannot say “this.”

Returning to the Rebbe's fathers comment: The verse that uses the word "this day" was a verse referring to the covenant G-d made with the people at Sinai. This was a covenant that bound the people's souls with G-d, for they witnessed revealed G-dliness at Sinai. That is why it uses the phrase "this day." But our verse uses only the word "today," because this covenant was made prior to the people's entrance to the Land of Israel, where they would depart the miraculous environment of the desert and

have to begin to reveal G-dliness within the natural world and their own physical existence. Because this covenant was with the people's material selves, it could not be described as "this day."

Yet, it is specifically when we make a covenant between G-d and our physical selves, committing to bringing our foreign, material self into our relationship with G-d, that the covenant is everlasting and unbreakable.
