

Snapshots: Moshe's Final Day

I. Majesty and Mechanics

דברים פרק כט

(ט) אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני יקוק אלהיכם ראשיכם שבטיכם זקניכם ושטריכם כל איש ישראל:

(י) טפכם נשיכם וגרך אשר בקרב מחניך מחטב עציך עד שאב מימיך:

(יא) לעברך בברית יקוק אלהיך ובאלתו אשר יקוק אלהיך כרת עמך היום:

(יב) למען הקים אתך היום לו לעם והוא יהיה לך לאלהים כאשר דבר לך וכאשר נשבע לאבתיך לאברהם

ליצחק וליעקב:

(יג) ולא אתכם לבדכם אנכי כרת את הברית הזאת ואת האלה הזאת:

(יד) כי את אשר ישנו פה עמנו עמד היום לפני יקוק אלהינו ואת אשר איננו פה עמנו היום:

9 You are standing this day all of you before Hashem, your God: your heads, your tribes, your elders, and your officers, even all the men of Israel, **10** Your little ones, your wives, and your stranger who is in the midst of your camp, from the hewer of your wood unto the drawer of your water; **11** That you should enter into the covenant of Hashem your God--and into His oath--which Hashem, your God, makes with you this day; **12** that He may establish you this day to Himself for a people, and that He may be to you a God, as He spoke unto you, and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov.

1. Majestic goodbye from a שון כבוד פה וכבוד לשון: Potential lessons on various fronts...

2. Second covenant

כח: מט אלה דברי הברית אשר-צוה יהוה את-משה לכרת את-בני ישראל בארץ מואב מלבד הברית אשר-כרת אתם בחרב

Rav Soloveitchik: Why two covenants? Brit Avot and Brit Yachid. Characteristics of each. Their place within the teshuva experience of the Yamin Noraim, particularly Yom Kippur.

רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק א

הלכה ב

שעיר המשתלח לפי שהוא כפרה על כל ישראל כהן גדול מתודה עליו על לשון כל ישראל שנאמר והתודה עליו את כל עונות בני ישראל, שעיר המשתלח מכפר על כל עבירות שבתורה הקלות והחמורות, בין שעבר בזדון בין שעבר בשגגה, בין שהודע לו בין שלא הודע לו הכל מתכפר בשעיר המשתלח, והוא שעשה תשובה, אבל אם לא עשה תשובה אין השעיר מכפר לו אלא על הקלות, ומה הן הקלות ומה הן החמורות, החמורות הן שחייבין עליהם מיתת בית דין או כרת, ושבעות שוא ושקר אע"פ שאין בהן כרת הרי הן מן החמורות, ושאר מצות לא תעשה ומצות עשה שאין בהן כרת הם הקלות.

The ritual of the "Sent Goat" is a critical component in of the Rav's understanding of two essential avenues to teshuva-emanating from two separate b'ritot between HaShem and each Jew: The Brit Avot and Brit Yachid.

II. Warnings

דברים כט: יז-כ

פְּנִי־ישׁ בְּכֶם אִישׁ אֹי־אִשָּׁה אוֹ מִשְׁפָּחָה אֹי־שִׁבְטֵי אֲשֶׁר לִבָּבוּ פָנָה הַיּוֹם מֵעִם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְלַכֵּת לַעֲבֹד אֶת־
 אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם הַהֵם פְּנִי־ישׁ בְּכֶם שְׂרֵשׁ פְּרָה רֹאשׁ וְלַעֲנָה

וְהִיָּה בְשִׁמְעוֹ אֶת־דְּבָרֵי הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֵּאת וְהִתְבָּרַךְ בְּלִבָּבוּ לֵאמֹר שְׁלוֹם יִהְיֶה־לִּי כִּי בְשִׁרְרוֹת לִבִּי אֶלְךָ לִמְעַן

סְפוֹת הַרְוָה אֶת־הַצְּמָאָה

לֹא־יֵאבֵד יְהוָה סִלַּח לוֹ כִּי אִזְ יַעֲשֶׂן אֶפְי־הוּא וְקִנְאוֹתוֹ בְּאִישׁ הוּא וּרְבִצָּה בּוֹ כִּלְהָאֱלֹהִים הַכְּתוּבָה בְּסֵפֶר הַזֶּה
 וּמַחֲהֵה יְהוָה אֶת־שְׁמוֹ מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם

וְהִבְדִּילוּ יְהוָה לְרַעַה מִכָּל שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל אֱלֹהֵי הַבְּרִית הַכְּתוּבָה בְּסֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה

Perchance there is among you some man or woman, or some clan or tribe, whose heart is even now turning away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations— perchance there is among you a stock sprouting poison weed and wormwood.

When such a one hears the words of these sanctions, he may fancy himself immune, thinking, “I shall be safe, though I follow my own willful heart”—“so that the watered will be added with the dry.”

The LORD will never forgive him; rather will the LORD’s anger and passion rage against that man, till every sanction recorded in this book comes down upon him, and the LORD blots out his name from under heaven.

The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for misfortune, in accordance with all the sanctions of the covenant recorded in this book of Teaching.

1. What is the nature of the sin “beyond forgiveness” described here- “stock sprouting gall and wormwood.” What possibilities frighten Moshe?

- Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Sforno: contagion, deliberate spread, infecting the healthy with his plans
- Chizkuni: Just as a root is hidden, this sinner operates surreptitiously out of the reach of the law
- Ramban: emphasis on your effect upon others, even future generations-“from a sweet root no bitter plant will issue

2. What does “so that the watered will be added with the dry” mean?

- Onkelos as explained by Rashi: part of the punishment... unintentional sins will be punished as if intentional (watered-unintentional sins-as if drunk) (dry-out of desire)
- Rashbam: part of the sinner’s rationale my intentional sins will be hidden among the unintentional (watered-full intent-satiated and comfortable) (dry-less severe-out of compulsion, not rebelliousness)

- Sforno, Ibn Ezra: Sinner reasons: "By attaching my watered (satiated) soul to those who are thirsty for meaning, I will share in their blessing without true commitment. I will do as I please, but be carried along by the righteousness of the many.
- Ramban: A watered, satiated soul will be endangered if even a small thirst for the forbidden will enter his consciousness. He will desire more and more, ultimately spiraling downward....
- Another possibility: The sinner will reason that which is watered; that which I do well; will make up for that which I do poorly.....

Which interpretation is correct? Just as in halachic realm: אלו ואלו

III. וילך משה: Going somewhere???

A. Pashtanim

- Ramban: Moshe walks from the Levite Camp to the Israelite Camp "Ass one who is about to leave the company of his friend and asks his permission to do so
- Ibn Ezra: Moshe walks from tribe to tribe to inform them of his impending death and strengthen them with the appointment of Yehoshua...Alternatively, he goes from tribe to tribe to bless them with the brachot of Zot Ha'bracha
- Sforno: Vayeilech can mean to strengthen oneself. Moshe strengthens himself to console the nation over his impending death. He does not want the joy of entering the land to be mitigated.
- Chizkuni: Moshe goes from tribe to tribe because he no longer possesses the authority to congregate the nation...his leadership has already begun to wane
- Netziv: Moshe's miraculous ability to speak to entire nation, as God speaks through him, has slipped away
- RSRH: Moshe, the "anav" chooses not to use the chatzotzrot-but to bid farewell in the most personal, modest way
- Kli Yakar: Moshe wants to demonstrate that his leadership ends, not from weakness, but as a result of God's mandate. He therefore walks from tribe to tribe with his customary energy.
- Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin: A principle established at the time of the creation of the Mishkan maintains that you cannot point leadership upon the community without consultation. Moshe therefore goes from tribe to tribe to inform them that Yehoshua is assuming the reins of leadership. Does so privately, to avoid public objection

B. Midrashic, Mystical and more

- Targum Yonatan: The phrase “and Moshe went” must be amended through the addition of the words “to the sanctuary.” On the last day of his life, Moshe naturally gravitates to the Mishkan.
- Ohr Hachaim: The total euros statement “and Moshe went” references not his physical but spiritual essence. The Zohar maintains that 40 days before a person’s death, his soul temporarily travels from his body in order to discern its eventual place of rest in the heavenly spheres. The righteous can detect this phenomenon... Moshe thus knew this was his last day and acted accordingly.
- Quoted in Iturei Torah: The Talmud mandates that an individual should engage in a halachic discussion with his friend as he prepares to take leave of him. By doing so, the rabbis explain he will ensure that his friend remembers him up. The term Va'yeilech in this case is to be seen as the root of the word halacha. Va'yeilech Moshe, Moshe departs from the Israelites, through the sharing of Jewish law.
- Early Chassidic Sources: Moshe went... into the hearts and souls of the Israelites. “In the deepest recesses of each Jew, in his blood in his soul, in all generations and in all times, a spark of Moshe, or teacher, can be found (Alexander Zusia Friedman)

C. Moshe’s life bound by the word Va’leich: Discuss....

D. Last Day of your life: Din V’cheshban