

טַפְּכֶם וְנִשְׁיֹכֶם וְגֵרְךָ אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ מִחֹטֵב עֵצִים עַד שֹׂאֵב מִיַּיִךְ:

“Your children, your women, your resident aliens that are all within your camp, from the woodchopper until the water drawers.” (Devarim 29:10).

Moshe delineates that every person in Bnei Yisroel is standing before him that day to accept the covenant that is the Torah. Not to give a catchall, he identifies every category: the leaders and the commonfolk; men and women, children and adults. He even includes anyone that will reside permanently among Bnei Yisroel. They must follow the Torah, too. Finally, he includes two seemingly menial laborers: water carriers and wood cutters.

“Children.” Children are obligated in the entire Torah. Of course, they will need to pass through the ages of *chinuch*. However, to the extent they can, they are included in the bris and they are obligated in the Torah. They are included because otherwise it would appear only adults are obligated. Parents do not exempt their children.

“Women.” The first pasuk (9) said “and every man.” It would infer that this means only the men. The Torah used the word נְשִׁיָּם as it can mean wives. Therefore, these are adult women and the Torah, regardless of pronoun, includes all Yisroel women. Be they married or still under the roof of their fathers, and certainly if old enough but are unmarried so that they are not under their father’s roof. It is a *tzarich iyun* that Chazal were able to exempt women from many mitzvos (that rely on specific time). The Torah could not be clearer that the entire Torah applies to women. Fathers and husbands do not fulfill the obligations for their women.

“The resident alien that is in your tent.” This refers to the עֵרֶב רַב the mixed multitude that went out with them. (Shmos 12:38). They are the slaves of other nations that joined Bnei Yisroel in going free from Mitzrayim. They are not mentioned again until now. Moshe is teaching that these joiners that are in the camp – they voluntarily obligate themselves – and in the future immigrants in the Land, all must live by the Torah. It does not apply to the temporary resident. It refers only to the ones that become naturalized. (Many refer to this as a convert or *ger*). The Torah is the constitution of Eretz Yisroel. It is how the government – be it shofet, navi, or king – must govern. The elders – and later the Sanhedrin – are the legislatures, and the leaders are the enforcers of Hashem’s Law. It would infer immigrants are not included because they are not the original nation, however, since they joined, they are equal to Bnei Yisroel in their obligations and standing under the Torah.

“From woodchoppers until the water drawers.” If this meant slave it would have said slave or servant. Clearly, it cannot only refer to servants or slaves that chop wood or draw water. There is also no other pasuk that talks about Canaanite residents trying to fool Moshe with false conversion. Besides, “resident alien” already covered them. This means those that do work for the Mikdash, be it the Mishkan or Beis HaMikdash. It would infer that those who spend their time working for the *klal* are exempt from the Torah and

their actions and commitment to the *tzibur* already fulfill their obligations. The Torah is teaching that even the most useful volunteers to the public good are still bound by the Torah—just as the leaders are not above the Law.

The woodchoppers are those that chopped wood and supplied the Mikdash with fuel and supplies. They had a chag every year on the fifteen of the fifth month (Tu B'Av). They are important and vital to the running of the Mikdash. Water drawers are also vital as they supply the physical needs of the people. They bring water to drink and cleanse. This includes for washing hands and dipping utensils. It was so important that another chag was enacted for it. The intermediary days of Succos were celebrated, day and night, with the *nesech hamayim* celebration. Wood and water are so vital to the people for either cooking fuel or hydration, and vital to the Mikdash for cleanliness or fuel to burn ketores and karbanos.

“From the woodcutters...” Pasuk 9 starts the list with the obvious leaders, and then ends it, saying “from.” Everyone, men, women, children, leaders, residents, are all responsible to be the woodcutters and water drawers. This is not a new category of persons but a reiteration of everyone’s obligation to the *tzibur*. Everyone is responsible to serve the public. And everyone mentioned is bound by the Torah.

As part of the Rosh Hashana tefillah in *mussaf* we mention:

הֲלֹךְ וְקִרְאתָ בְּאָזְנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם לֵאמֹר כֹּה אָמַר ה' זְכַרְתִּי לְךָ יְקֻסֵד נְעוּרֶיךָ אֶהְבֵת כְּלוּלְתֶיךָ
לְכַתֵּךְ אַחֲרַי בְּמִדְבָר בְּאַרְץ לֹא זְרוּעָה:

“Go and call out in the ears of Yerushalayim, saying: So said Hashem, ‘I remember for you your kindness as a youth, your bridal days love. That you traveled after Me in the desert, in a land that was not sown.” (Yermiyahu 2:2).

“Go.” This means to walk with someone or something. There are many pesukim that corroborate this: Bereishis 3:8, 13:3, 17:1, Tehillim 126:6, 56:14. This is instruction for Yermiyahu to walk with the residents of Yerushalayim. He should not make himself aloof or estranged from them. The tragedy that will come – destruction, expulsion, and exile – will happen to him, too. He is to walk with them. That is the only way he can effectively give his message.

“And call out in the ears of Yerushalayim.” This expression isn’t found elsewhere in Tana’ch. “Calling” is like naming something, or calling something in a personal way. Yermiyahu is to call out to the ears of Yerushalayim. He is to speak to them personally, like whispering in their ear. Make the message personal man to man.

“So said Hashem:” This is a proclamation.

“I remember for you.” It is for Bnei Yisroel’s sake that Hashem remembers. They can be judged on their own merits. However, Hashem chooses to remember the good, and only the good. Atheists like to say they do not believe in a good god when they see so much evil in the world. They do not understand (1) it is men who do the evil, and (2) they are really not believing in a god that they think should be of their own making. Men are in the Lord’s image, not the other way around. They want a god who runs the world by their own standard. However, they themselves are not just, kind, giving, patient, or forgiving. They just want an excuse to turn away, despite the double standard. Hashem can punish the world many times over. However, He chooses to remember the good from the past – and only the good. It is for man’s sake that He has this selective memory.

“Your kindness as a youth.” Children have the greatest capacity for good. Before they see and know the evil in the world, they are free from biases, prejudices, and gratuitous hatred. When they do kindness, it is not for the sake of a reward. They may behave to get reward but their kindness is usually virtuous. The kindness of youth is Noach taking in the animals and caring for them during the flood, Avraham running after guests and giving kindness to the world, Tamar not giving away or embarrassing Yehuda, and Yoseph interpreting dreams to put anxieties at ease. It is the kindness of the midwives in Mitzrayim that hid the male babies, Moshe ever defending Bnei Yisroel, Rus following her mother-in-law, Boaz being kind to the convert Rus, and the

widow from Tzurfata who was destitute but fed Eliyahu. It is the thousands of unnamed kindnesses that slaves in Mitzrayim did for their fellow until they were freed.

“Bridal days love.” There is no greater rush of love than by the newly married. It is the culmination of their courtship and it before the stresses of livelihood, children, and housing. However, the greatest and deepest love is a married couple who have gone through life for decades. That is true love that has lasted a lifetime. While lifetime love is deepest, it is tainted by the strains of life stresses. Hashem is remembering the original love, before sin, before dissension, before all the baggage. The key to getting to the love after a lifetime of marriage is always remembering the love before it was put to the test. The love should not be dampened just because obstacles came in the way.

“You walked after me.” This is the same as “Go.” It is walking together. The entire Bnei Yisroel walked together in anticipation of receiving the Torah. (Shmos 19:8). They were one nation with one heart. They did walk after Hashem but that was because they were going free. Yet, Hashem still remembers this to their benefit. Even though they had not much of a choice (despite their constant complaining about wanting to return to Mitzrayim) because they wanted to leave bondage, they still are remembered as having followed after Hashem. It is not just that they ran after Hashem. They walked with Him. He led the way but they were not merely leaving Mitzrayim at any opportunity. They were not just running from Mitzrayim but were running to Hashem.

“After me.” Bnei Yisroel followed His commandments.

“In the desert, to a land that was not sown.” After Adam and Chava sinned they were punished and banished and they ended up outside of the Garden and in a land that they had to sow themselves. (Ibid 3:17). After Hashem put man out of the Garden of Eden to a land that they had to sow themselves (it was a land unsown), they did spend their time finding Hashem. Adam, Shes, Noach, Shem, Melchizedek, then Avraham all found Hashem. They went after His teachings. Avraham gave it to his children and a nation was born that pined for redemption if only to serve Hashem.

Bnei Yisroel followed Hashem to a desert that had no food or water. They took only the bread on their backs. Hashem only remembers that part. He does not remember the complaining or the strife. That is a Lord that is Good, to only remember the good and only credit the good and not to debit the bad. In this memory full of youthful kindness and bridal day love, Hashem remembers history as Bnei Yisroel running after Him even to a desert, even to a land that could not sustain them. All they wanted was the drink the Word of Hashem and be satiated with His Law.

The desert and land unsown were the world without freedom or His Law. They walked after him to teach the world of freedom and to learn, and live by, His Law.

This prophesy was given at a time when destruction and exile were imminent. It was meant for each individual to heed and also to remember the youthful kindness and bridal day love. It was not merely meant to give hope that after exile there would be redemption. It was a hope that if they remembered the good also then they would turn back to their love, Hashem, and reciprocate His kindnesses, and reenact their own love

and kindness. They could have staved off exile and expulsion. At this stage, in exile, it can help expedite the redemption.

May Hashem remember us in these merits, give us not only the good World-to-Come but a good life on this earth, filled with plenty, health, love, kindness, family, long life, and nachas.