

א שטיקל תורה A LITTLE SLICE OF TORAH

פון פרשת דער וואָך FROM THE WEEKLY PORTION

September 05, 2026



"Fostering diverse modes of attention to textual details cultivates correlative forms of attention to the world and divine reality"

Michael Fishbane (1943-), *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*

ברוך אתה יי, אלהינו מלך העולם,
אשר קדשנו במצותיו, וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה:

"Tachometer Torah"



...read down to the red line

Parashat-haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: Nitzavim-vaYeileich

Consists of: Deuteronomy 29:9-31:30

Sequence—

in Deuteronomy: 8th and 9th of 11

in annual Torah cycle: 51st and 52nd of 54



A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Deuteronomy 29:17-28

Context: Deuteronomy, last of the Five Books of the Torah, consists of Moses's farewell address to the Jewish people, in which he reviews— and formally renews our commitment to— the Covenant we and our parents had made at Mount Sinai a generation earlier.

Content: Moving to the conclusion of his farewell address to the Israelites, Moses invokes an urgent plea for them to carry forth faithfulness to their Covenant with God. Emphasizing that this is a comprehensive duty, with individual responsibility for the corporate weal, he invokes a dramatic motivational model of what happens to the whole barrel when one apple is rotten.

29:17a] - Lest there is, even now, among you some man or some woman (or even some entire clan or Tribe) whose heart is turning away from The Eternal One, our God, with the intent of worshipping the gods of those other nations;

פון יש בכם איש או אשה או
משפחה או שבט אשר לבבו פנה
היום מעם יהוה אלהינו ללקח
לעבד את אלהי הגוים ההם

29:17b] - lest there is in your midst a root that bears gall and wormwood, [29:18] - who, upon hearing the words of these sanctions, congratulate themselves inwardly, thinking: **"I shall be safe; I will do whatever I want,"** in order to bring utter ruin to moist and dry alike,

פון יש בכם שרש פרה ראש ולענה
והיה בשמעו את דברי האלה
הזאת והתברך בלבבו לאמר
שלום יהיה לי כי בשררות לבי
אלך למען ספות הרנה את
הצמאה

- more over

29:19] - The Eternal One is unwilling to forgive them. Rather, **the anger and passion of The Eternal One will rage against them, until every sanction recorded in this Book comes down upon them**, and The Eternal One blots out their name from under heaven. [29:20] - The Eternal One will single it out— from all the Tribes of Israel— for misfortune, in accordance with all the sanctions of the Covenant recorded in this Torah book.

29:21] - And later generations will ask (the children who succeed you, and foreigners who come from distant lands), when they see the plagues and diseases that The Eternal One has inflicted upon that land— [29:22] - all its soil devastated by sulfur and salt; beyond sowing and producing; no grass growing in it (just like the upheaval of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Tz'vo'im, which The Eternal One overthrew in fierce anger [in the times of Abraham - Genesis 19:24ff])— [29:23] - **then all the nations will ask: “Why did The Eternal One do that to this land? What prompted this awful wrath?”**

29:24] - They will be told, **“It is because they forsook the Covenant that The Eternal One, God of their ancestors, made with them upon freeing them from the land of Egypt. [29:25] - They persisted in revering other gods, and worshipping them— gods they had never experienced, and which He had not assigned to them.**

29:26] - **“Therefore The Eternal One was incensed at that land**, and brought upon it all the curses recorded in this Book. [29:27] - **The Eternal One uprooted them from upon their soil** in anger; fury; and great wrath— and cast them into another land, **to this very day.”**

29:28] - **What is concealed** belongs solely to The Eternal One, our God; **what is revealed**, is ours and our children's forever, to do all the words of this Torah.

לֹא יִאֲבֹה יְהוָה סִלַּח לוֹ כִּי אִזְּעֹשׁ
אִף יְהוָה וְקִנְאָתוֹ בְּאִישׁ הֵהוּא
וּרְבִצָּה בּוֹ כָּל הָאֱלֹהִים הַכְּתוּבָה
בְּסֵפֶר הַזֶּה וּמָחָה יְהוָה אֶת שְׁמוֹ
מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהִבְדִּילוֹ יְהוָה
לְרָעָה מִכָּל שְׁבִטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּכָל
אֲלוֹת הַבְּרִית הַכְּתוּבָה בְּסֵפֶר
הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה

וְאָמַר הַדּוֹר הָאַחֲרוֹן בְּנֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר
יָקוּמוּ מֵאַחֲרֵיכֶם וְהַנִּכְרִי אֲשֶׁר
יָבֹא מֵאֶרֶץ רְחוֹקָה וְרָאוּ אֶת מְכוֹת
הָאֶרֶץ הַהוּא וְאֶת תַּחֲלָאִיהָ אֲשֶׁר
חָלָה יְהוָה בָּהּ גְּפָרִית וּמָלַח שְׂרָפָה
כָּל אֶרֶצָהּ לֹא תִזְרַע וְלֹא תִצְמַח
וְלֹא יֵעָלֶה בָּהּ כָּל עֵשֶׂב כְּמַהֲפַכֶּת
סֹדֶם וְעֶמְקָהּ אֲדָמָה וְצִבּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר
הִפָּךְ יְהוָה בְּאִפּוֹ וּבִחֲמָתוֹ וְאָמְרוּ
כָּל הַגּוֹיִם עַל מֶה עָשָׂה יְהוָה כֹּכָה
לְאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת מֶה חָרִי הָאֵף הַגָּדוֹל
הַזֶּה

וְאָמְרוּ עַל אֲשֶׁר עָזְבוּ אֶת בְּרִית
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתָם אֲשֶׁר כָּרַת עִמָּם
בְּהוֹצִיאָם אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם
וַיִּלְכוּ וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא
יָדְעוּם וְלֹא חָלַק לָהֶם

וַיַּחַר אִף יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ הַהוּא לְהִבִּיאַ
עָלֶיהָ אֶת כָּל הַקְּלָלָה הַכְּתוּבָה
בְּסֵפֶר הַזֶּה וַיִּתְּשֵׁם יְהוָה מֵעַל
אֲדָמָתָם בְּאֵף וּבִחֲמָה וּבִקְצָף גָּדוֹל
וַיִּשְׁלַכֵם אֶל אֶרֶץ אַחֲרָת כַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה

הַנִּסְתָּרוֹת לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְהַנִּגְלוֹת
לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ עַד עוֹלָם לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל
דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת



TORAH Snippet

וַיִּלְכוּ וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לָהֶם
 29:25 - They persisted in revering other gods, and worshipping them—
 אֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּם
 gods they had never experienced,
 וְלֹא חָלַק לָהֶם
 and which He had not assigned to them

וַיִּפֹּן תִּשָּׂא עֵינֶיךָ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְרָאִיתָ אֶת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וְאֶת הַיָּרֵחַ וְאֶת הַכּוֹכָבִים כֻּלָּם
 צָבָא הַשָּׁמַיִם וְנִדְחָתָה וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוִיתָ לָהֶם

A) Deuteronomy 4:19-20) - Lest you raise your eyes to the heavens, and (behold-
 ing the sun; the moon; and the stars— all those celestial hosts) you spurn [God], and instead
 bow low before them.

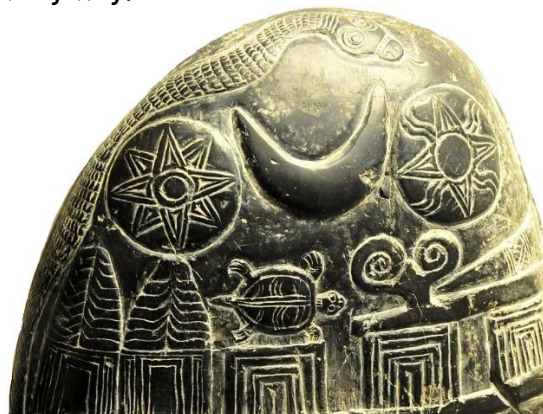
וַעֲבַדְתֶּם אֲשֶׁר חָלַק יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
 אֲתֶם לְכָל הָעַמִּים תַּחַת כָּל
 הַשָּׁמַיִם

Thereby you will be offering adoration to
 those things which The Eternal One, your
 God, has assigned to the [other] peoples of
 the earth—

וְאֲתֶכֶם לָקַח יְהוָה וַיּוֹצֵא אֶתְכֶם
 מִכּוּר הַבְּרָזֶל מִמִּצְרַיִם לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ
 לְעַם נַחֲלָה כִּיּוֹם הַזֶּה

whereas you, The Eternal One has brought
 out from that iron furnace of Egypt, and
 taken you as His Heritage People, to the
 present day.

Kudurru honoring (right-to-left) the sun, the
 moon, and the stars. Serpent at top is The
 Milky Way.



Babylon – c. 1200 BCE

אשר חלק ה' – לאלוהות

B) RaSHI (Shlomo Yitzchaqi, 1040-1105) on Deuteronomy 4:19 - “Which God has
 assigned” etc. - [for them to regard these celestial luminaries] as divinities.

לא מנעו מלטעות אחריהם אלא החליקם בדברי הבליהם לטרדם מן
 העולם

[God] did not prevent them from going
 astray after them, but He slipped
 them up through vain speculations,
 to harry them out of the world.

ח-ל-ק verb

“to allocate; to divide up” “to be slick; to slip”
 חָלַק חָלַק

וכן הוא אומר כי החליק אליו בעיניו למצוא עונו לשנוא

Even so does Scripture state: “[God] slipped him up through what his eyes beheld, so that
 his iniquity might be found out and punished” [Psalm 36:3].

- more over



TORAH Snippet

וַיִּשְׁלֹכֵם יְהוָה מֵעַל אֲדָמָתָם בְּאֶרֶץ

29:27 - ...uprooted them from upon their soil . . .

וַיִּשְׁלֹכֵם אֶל אֶרֶץ אֲחֵרָה

and **cast them** into another land, where they remain to this day.”

C) David Feinstein (1929-2020), *Kol Dodi* - In the Torah scroll, the word וַיִּשְׁלֹכֵם *vayash-licheim* “and cast them” is written with the character **lamed** larger than the other letters. That suggests an emphasis on this letter— but with what meaning, and to what purpose?

It is worth noting that the name of this letter is the verb לָמַד *lamad*, “learning.” The intimation is that The Holy And Blessed One will be exiling the Jews from their land, **in order for them to learn** the outcome of straying from the Torah. In other words, **God’s primary purpose is not punishment, but instruction**: if the nation could learn that the consequence of sin is banishment and persecution, it would be zealous in its observance of the Torah and its commandments.

Another approach might be to see the enlarged *lamed* as distinct from— and, as such, not included as part of— the rest of the word. Removing it leaves us with the verb וַיִּשְׁכֵּם *vayash-keim* “**start out early**,” which in this verse is a reference to the teaching of the sages that the Jews were expelled from their land **two years before the point of no return**. Had The Eternal One waited two more years before exiling Israel, their accumulated transgressions would have been so much more numerous that the destruction might have been even greater (which Heaven forbid!). Had that happened, Israel might not have been able to survive... and, to avert that, God brought the exile two years earlier.

Babylonian Talmud - Gittin 88b

What is the point of the words, “Therefore The Eternal One has watched over the evil and brought it upon us— for The Eternal One, our God, is righteous” [Daniel 9:14]? Because The Eternal One is “righteous,” does He therefore watch over the evil and bring it upon us?

Rav Ulla says that the numerical value of וְנוֹשְׁנָתָם “you shall grow old” [Deuteronomy 4:25] is 852, while that of תִּשְׁמָדוֹן “you shall be utterly destroyed” [Deuteronomy 4:26] is 850. The “righteousness” of The Eternal One consists of **anticipating “you shall grow old” by two years.**

However, if that were the case, then it would be more usual for the scribal convention to write the negligible letter smaller than the rest, as is usually the case when a word is to be read without the indicated letter. Since that is not the case, and the letter is enlarged rather than shrunk down, it must be to the contrary point to some emphatic meaning.

The letter *lamed* must therefore be understood as the prepositional prefix meaning “to” or “**for**.” In the context of our verse, it would have the meaning “for our benefit,” indicating that the expulsion from our land was really to our benefit. We may even go further, and say that— no matter how much we have suffered during our exile— **eventually we will understand that it was for our benefit.**

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TORAH Snippet

וְאָמְרוּ כָּל הַגּוֹיִם עַל מֶה עָשָׂה יְהוָה כִּכָּה לְאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת

29:23 - ...all nations will ask, “Why did The Eternal One **do that to this land?**”

D) Zvi-Hirsh ben-Avraham Cahane (1790?-1865), *Likutei RaTZBa* - The meaning of this verses is to highlight that **it was an act of mercy on the part of The Eternal One** to pour out



His wrath upon the soil, the stones, and the trees.

When the nations shall stand and gaze in amazement at the terrible destruction and ruin which obviously were not due to natural causes, they will be told: “It is because they forsook the Covenant that The Eternal One, God of their ancestors, made with them” [verse 24].

Thus **the people themselves were deserving of annihilation**, and yet “The Eternal One therefore was incensed at that land, and **brought upon it all the curses** recorded in this Book” [verse 26]. The curse of utter ruin came only upon the land, and not upon the people. So it is that, even though The Eternal One “angrily uprooted them from upon their soil. . . and cast them into another land” [verse 27], **Israel nonetheless survived, and continues to exist** as a people.



TORAH Snippet

כִּן יֵשׁ בְּכֶם שָׂרֵשׁ פִּרְה רֹאשׁ וְלַעֲנָה

29:17 - ...lest there is in your midst a root that bears gall and wormwood

E) Alexander Zusia Friedman (1897-1943), *Ma'ayanei haTorah* - The initial letters of the Hebrew words for “a root that bears gall and wormwood” form the word **שופר** *shofar*.

This is a timely teaching, from this weekly portion read during the introspective month of Elul.

It teaches us that **the blasts of the shofar**, sounded daily in preparation for the coming Days of Awe, **are capable of uprooting from the heart the roots of evil** that “bear gall and wormwood.”



- more over



TORAH Snippet

הַנִּסְתָּרִית לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ

29:28 - What is concealed belongs solely to The Eternal One, our God;

וְהַגָּלוּת לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ עַד עוֹלָם

but what is revealed, is ours and our children's forever

לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת

to do all the words of this Torah

הנסתרות לה' אלהינו - ואם תאמרו מה בידינו לעשות אתה מעניש את הרבים
על ההורוי היחיד שנאמר פן יש בכם איש וגוי ואח"כ וראו את מכות הארץ
ההיא והלא אין אדם יודע מטמונותיו של חברו

F) RaSHI (Shlomo Yitzchaqi, 1040-1105) on Deuteronomy 29:28 - "What is concealed belongs solely to The Eternal One" - And if you protest: "If so, then what are we in a position to do? **For You are punishing the multitude for the thoughts of an individual** (even as it is said 'Lest there be one person' *etc.* [verse 17], and subsequently [in verse 21] 'then you will all see how the land is stricken!'). **Certainly none of us can know the innermost thoughts of his fellow!**"

אין אני מעניש אתכם על הנסתרות שהן לה' אלהינו והוא יפרע מאותו יחיד
[To which Moses replies:] "I am not establishing punishment because of secret thoughts; these belong to The Eternal One, our God, Who will exact punishment from that individual.

אבל הנגלות לנו ולבנינו **לבער הרע מקרבנו** ואם לא נעשה דין בהם יענוש את הרבים

"But [we are, indeed, accountable for] those transgressions 'revealed' [to have been committed by] 'us and our children,' **in order that we may put away the evil from our midst.** For if we do not enact judgement on them, the entire community suffers."

דעתי בדרך הפשט כי הנסתרות הם החטאים הנסתרים מן העושים אותם כמו
שגיאיות מי יבין מנסתרות נקני

G) RaMBaN (Bonastruc da Porta, 1194-1270) on Deuteronomy 29:28 - I think that the straightforward reading of this verse is that "**what is concealed**" are **the sins that are hidden from those who commit them**— even as it says in Scripture: "Who can discern errors? Cleanse me from **hidden faults**" [Psalm 19:3].

יאמר הנסתרות לשם לבדו הם אין לנו בהן עון אשר חטא

The verse is stating that our "**hidden faults**" belong solely to The Ineffable One[— Who, Alone, is aware of them—], and that we bear no guilt for having transgressed [unknowingly].

אבל הנגלות שהם הזדונות לנו ולבנינו עד עולם לעשות את כל דברי התורה
הזאת חוקת עולם

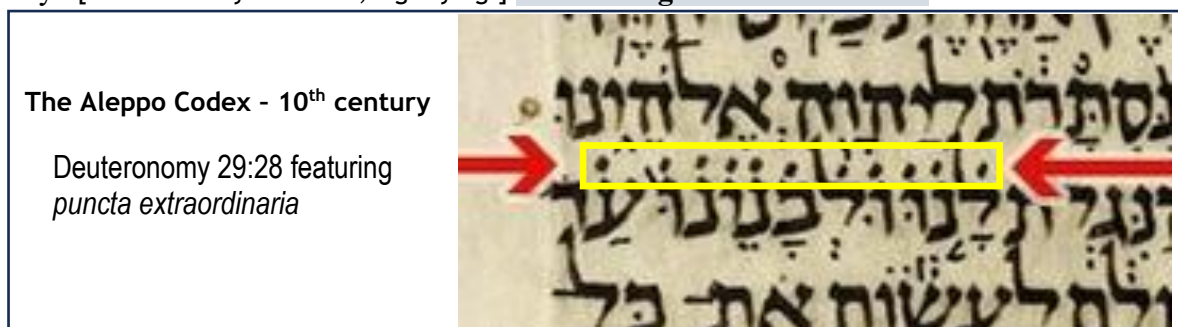
However, "what is revealed"— namely, our conscious sins— belong "to us and to our children forever," that we may do all the words of this Law as an eternal statute.

שכך קבלנו על אשר ישנו פה ועל אשר איננו פה לדורות עולם

For even so did we accept "[this Covenant (together with its sanctions) with] both those who

- continued

are standing here with us this day . . . and with those who are not [yet] with us here this day” [Deuteronomy 29:13-14, signifying:] **for all the generations to come.**



ולפי שהביא באלה לעשות כל המצוה הוציא מן החרם העושה בשגגה שלא
יתקלל באלה הזאת

But inasmuch as Moses invoked in this imprecation the obligation “to do all the *mitzvot*,”
he perforce exempts from the ban whoever commits a sin unintentionally, to not be
afflicted by this curse.

העולם שאנו בו נקרא נסתרות כי מבשרי אחזה אלהי כמו שאדם מכוסה
בלבושים והפרצוף הוא מגולה

H) Mei’ir haLeivi Rotenberg of Apt (1760-1827), *Or laShamayim* on Deuteronomy
29:28 - The world in which we are, is called “hidden.” For we are touched by Godliness,
the way a person shows his countenance while they are otherwise concealed with clothing.

כמו כן יש בעולמות העליונים אותם שהם קרובים להמאציל הם בלי לבושי
אבל העולמות שהם בבחי' מטה צריכים ללבוש שלא יוכלו לינק מהשפע ולכן
נק' העוה"ז נסתרות

In similar manner, there are higher realms where there are those in the Presence of The
Exalted One without any impeding covering. But in **the lower domains we must be
veiled**, to keep us apart from that overwhelming abundance— and, accordingly, these
worlds are called “hidden.”

וזפ"ה הנסתרות לה' אלהינו וזה מתתא לעילא דהיינו להעלות העולם
התחתון ולקשר למעלה

This is the meaning of “What is concealed belongs solely to The Eternal One, our God”:
namely, the Upper World, which elevates this lower world and connects it to the Most
High.

והנגלות לנו נגלות נקרא עולם העליונים

“But what is revealed, is ours” – “revealed” is what those domains Above are called,
[since they were made known to us through Torah];

לנו היינו מעילא לתתא יבוא רחמים גדולים עלינו

and they are “ours” [by virtue of having been made known to us through Torah], by means of
which **great compassion from On High will come upon us** [here below].

לעשות את כל דברי התורה הזאת כדי שנוכל לקיים את התורה ולא יהיה לנו
שום מסך המבדיל וטוב עלינו ועל כל עמו ישראל אמן

“To do all the words of this Torah” – in order that we may, without any impediment, be
able to substantiate the Torah, that it may be well for us, and for all His people Israel.
Amen!