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In Parshat Netzavim the Torah introduces us to the Mitzva of Teshuva, repentance (V'shavta ad Hashem – Devarim 30:2). Teshuva represents part of a Brit (covenant) aimed at the entire nation - from the water carriers on up to the leaders of the people. Presumably, the theme of repentance and return, taking up half of the Parsha, is the rationale behind its coupling with the onset of the Aseret Yemei Teshuva (invariably the reading of Netzavim precedes Rosh Hashanah). However, the framework of the covenant itself seems superfluous; the Torah had concluded a lengthy Brit of Beracha and Tochacha (blessing and rebuke) a scant nine Psukim before. Indeed, this problem seems to be the motivating factor in the understanding of several mefarshim that Netzavim is not a new Brit at all but represents the continuation and conclusion of the lengthy Tochacha laid out in Ki Tavo. In this understanding, the concluding verse of the Tochacha: *"These are the terms of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to conclude with the Israelites in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb"* (Devarim 28:69) is not the final word. Netzavim should be viewed as an appendix in which Moshe delineates the length of the commitment (Devarim 29:14), the parties to the contract (Devarim 29:13-14) and the ability - through the aegis of teshuva - to revive the covenant even after its seeming abrogation (Devarim 30: 1- 10).

Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, in his commentary Ha'amek Davar, disagrees. Not only, in his opinion, is a new Brit developed in Netzavim, it is also fundamentally different than the two covenants that preceded it. In the covenant at Sinai and in Ki Tavo, the partner to Hashem in the covenant is the entity that is Am Yisrael. No particular Jew is bound to the Brit as an individual, but by virtue of his or her being a member of the Klal (community). In Netzavim however, each person is spoken to as an individual – with their own strengths and weaknesses brought to the fore. The Sho'ev Meimecha's (water carrier's) relationship with Hashem may very well be fundamentally different than that of the Rosh Shivtecha (Head of Tribe). Each needs to commit to God not only as a member of the community, but as a unique and discrete entity unto his own. It is the simultaneous obligation on both the communal and the individual planes that creates the total Brit. Moreover, it is only after that two pronged commitment is forged can Teshuva be spoken of in its fullest sense – an individual drawing close to his God through his own soul searching as well as by virtue of his being part of the community.

May we in the Torah MiTzion community, together with our families and all Bet Yisrael, be granted a year – this year, next year and every year - of health, happiness and success in furthering our personal and communal covenants with Hashem.

Shana Tova V'Ketiva VaChatima Tova

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