

# Parsha Q&A



## Parshas Nitzavim

For the week ending 28 Elul 5758  
18 & 19 September 1998

### Parsha Questions

1. Why did Moshe gather the Jewish People together on the day of his death?
2. Who were the wood-cutters and water-drawers mentioned in verse 29:10?
3. How do two parties "pass" into a covenant?
4. What is the connection between the verse "Atem nitzavim" and the curses in the previous parsha?
5. Why can't Hashem disassociate himself from the Jewish People?
6. How many curses were listed in Parshas Ki Savo?
7. Which two leaders followed Moshe's example and assembled the people at the end of their rule?
8. With whom did Moshe make the covenant and oath?
9. Why did the Jewish People see only idols of wood and stone?
10. What is meant by the punishment of "adding drunkenness to thirst (29:18)?"
11. The Hebrew word for nose and anger are the same. What is the connection?
12. Why is Hashem described in anthropomorphic terms?
13. What two cities were destroyed along with Sodom and Amorah?
14. When is the entire nation punished for the sins of an individual?
15. When and where did the Jewish People become culpable for each other's sins (areivim zeh lazeh)?
16. According to Rashi, how will the day of the ingathering of the exiles be "great and difficult?"
17. If the Torah remained in heaven, what would be expected of us?
18. In what way is the Torah close to the Jewish People?
19. Why did Hashem call the Heaven and Earth as witnesses to the covenant between Him and the Jewish People?
20. What should the Jewish People learn from the way the Heaven and Earth function?

### Sherlox Holmes

Watstein scratched his head, perplexed. "The verse," he said, "says: You are all standing here this day in front of Hashem your G-d: Your tribal heads, your elders, your officers...from your wood choppers to your water carriers.... (Devarim 29:10). Rashi says that these wood choppers and water carriers were specifically Canaanites who converted in the time of Moshe. Apparently, they tried to fool Moshe into thinking they were not Canaanites; Moshe, of course, wasn't fooled, and fined them for their irreverence by relegating them to slave status."  
"Deservedly so, wouldn't you say?" said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes.  
"But how does Rashi know that it refers to a specific class of people? Perhaps it simply refers to any Jew, converted or native-born, who happened to be a wood chopper or water carrier?"  
"The commentaries answer your question Watstein, but I've got an answer of my own...."

#### Answer:

"Rashi," said Sherlock, "says that these verses list the people in order of importance: Your tribal heads, your elders, your officers (29:9)."  
"It makes sense, then, that wood choppers are last," said Watstein, "Not really," said Sherlock. "In Torah terms, a person's importance is based not on his societal status, but rather on the merit of his actions and the sincerity of his striving to understand and fulfill his Divine mission. As Maimonides writes: Some of the greatest Sages of Israel were wood choppers and water carriers (Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:9)."  
"True," said Watstein, "a menial livelihood doesn't detract from a person's spiritual stature."  
"Here too," said Sherlock, "wood choppers and water carriers cannot merely describe a group whose livelihood happened to be such — for this would be irrelevant to the context 'You are all standing here this day in front of Hashem your G-d' — in front of Hashem, great and small are equal. Rather, it must refer to a group of people whose lesser status is not due to being wood choppers, but to some other factor; namely, their disreputable behavior."

*Sherlox concept by Reuven Subar*

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Dedication opportunities are available for Parsha Q&A — Please contact us for details.

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## Recommended Reading List

### Ramban

29:18	Refusing the Covenant
29:28	Accidental Sins
30:2	Returning to Hashem
30:6	Divine Help

### Sforno

29:18	Denying the Curse
30:6	Clinging to Hashem
30:9-10	Our Own Merit
30:11	Repentance in Exile

## I Did Not Know That!

The word “shofar” is related to the Hebrew word “shapair,” which means “improve.” The shofar blast tells us: “Improve your ways!”

Vayikra Rabba 29

## Answers to this Week's Questions

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated*

1. 29:9 - To initiate them into the covenant with Hashem.
2. 29:10 - Canaanites who came to join the Jewish People.
3. 29:11 - The two parties place objects in two parallel lines and pass between them.
4. 29:12 - The Jewish People asked, “Who can survive such curses?” Moshe comforted them, saying, “You’ve done a lot to anger Hashem, and yet — ‘atem nitzavim’ —Hashem didn’t destroy you ...you’re still standing before Him.”
5. 29:12 - Because He told them and swore to the Avos (Patriarchs) that the Jewish People would always remain His nation.
6. 29:12 - Ninety-eight.
7. 29:12 - Yehoshua and Shmuel.
8. 29:14 - With the people standing before him and all future generations.
9. 29:16 - Because these were exposed openly. The idols of gold and silver however, were locked away by their owners for fear of theft.
10. 29:18 - Even unintentional sins will be considered by Hashem as if they were committed intentionally. “Drunkenness” refers to sins committed unintentionally. “Thirst” refers to sins committed intentionally.
11. 29:19 - When one gets angry, his nostrils flare.
12. 29:19 - The Torah speaks in terms that people can understand.
13. 29:22 - Admah and Tsevoyim.
14. 29:28 - When the Jewish People fail to bring the sinner to judgment.
15. 29:28 - When the Jewish People took the oath at Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval.
16. 30: 3 - It will be as if Hashem needs to take each individual by the hand and lead him out of exile.
17. 30:12 - To pursue it in order to study it.
18. 30:14 - It was given to them in oral and written form.
19. 30:19 - Because they exist forever and will be able to testify if the Jewish People sin in the future.
20. 30:19 - Heaven and the Earth don’t receive reward or punishment, yet they never deviate from their ordained functions. All the more so, we, who are rewarded for good behavior, should do Hashem’s will.

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