

# Close Enough to Reach

Parshas Nitzavim-Vayeilech

OHR HACHAIM · DEVARIM 29:9

## Responsibility, According to Your Reach

**W**hy does the Torah spell out every layer of the nation before this covenant — leaders, tribal heads, elders, ordinary people — when it already said “all of you”? The Ohr HaChaim explains that this covenant established something new: arvus, mutual responsibility for one another. Bnei Yisrael had not been bound to each other this way before — which is part of why the sin of the Golden Calf could happen with no one stepping in to stop it.

But he adds an important qualifier: not everyone carries the same scope. He connects this to Chazal’s teaching that whoever can protest wrongdoing across the whole world and doesn’t is accountable for the whole world; whoever can only in his own town is accountable for his town; whoever can only in his own home is accountable for his home. That’s exactly why the pasuk lists the layers separately — leaders for the nation, tribal heads for their tribe, elders for their households, each person for his own family. The Torah isn’t asking the impossible of anyone — only that each person act where he actually can.

KLI YAKAR · DEVARIM 30:14

## The Distance Was Never the Problem

The Torah insists teshuva “is not beyond the sea” — as if someone might think real repentance requires literally returning to wherever they sinned. The Kli Yakar addresses this directly: someone who sinned with a particular person in a distant place might assume there’s no fixing it until he can somehow go back there.

Not so, he says. “Close to you” means precisely this: confession in the mouth, regret in the heart. That’s the actual place the sin happened, and that same place is exactly where the repair happens too.

KLI YAKAR · DEVARIM 30:15

## Live For What, Exactly?

The pasuk lists life before good — “the life and the good” — which seems backwards. Shouldn’t doing good come first, since that’s what earns the life?

The Kli Yakar’s answer reframes the whole relationship: a person shouldn’t want to do good in order to live. He should want to live in order to do good. Life isn’t the payoff that makes serving Hashem worthwhile — it is itself the opportunity. Wanting more time was never about wanting more reward. It’s about wanting more chances to act.

FOR THE TABLE

*Before asking for another year, it’s worth asking what we actually plan to do with it — life isn’t the reward for good, it’s the chance to do it.*

WORTH ASKING

Is there someone within your actual reach right now who could use you stepping in?

IN THE MARGINS