

MORASHAH
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Parashat HaShavuah Series

Ki Tavo

In two weeks, we will begin to celebrate the high holidays. In Hebrew, these days are called ימים נוראים (*Yamim Nora'im*) – *Days of Awe*. They are auspicious, and they are momentous. It's no wonder, then, that one of the most popular songs on those days is a song "היום! היום! היום!" (*Hayom*) – Today! Today! Today! At first glance, it makes sense to single out our days of awe, our days of judgment.

The Biblical equivalent of the היום song is the book of Deuteronomy. The word היום meaning “today” is used constantly throughout the book of Deuteronomy. It occurs 13 times in this week’s Torah portion alone:

1. And you shall go to the Kohen that exist in those days and say to him, “I have told the LORD your God **today** that I have come to the land that the LORD promised to our ancestors to give to us. (26:3)
2. **Today** the LORD your God commands you to fulfill all these statutes and all these laws, and you shall keep and do them with all your heart and all your soul. (26:16)
3. You have declared the LORD **today** to be your God, to follow His path and keep his statutes, commandments, and laws, and to hearken to His voice (26:17).
4. And God has declared you **today** to be for Him a treasure nation, as He has told you – and [for you] to keep His commandments. (26: 18)
5. And Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the nation saying: Keep all the commandments which I command you **today**. (27:1)
6. And it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall erect these stones which I command you **today** upon Mount Eval, and plaster them with plaster (27:4)
7. And Moses and the priests the Levites spoke to all of Israel saying: ‘Be silent and listen, **today** you become a nation for the LORD your God.’ (27:9)
8. And you shall listen to the LORD your God and do all of His commandments and statutes, which I command you **today**. (27:10)
9. And it shall be if you listen to the voice of the LORD your God, to faithfully follow all the commandments which I command you **today**, then the LORD your God will place you on top of all the nations of the land. (28:1)

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10. And the LORD will make you as a head and not a tail, and you will be above, and you will not be below, if you listen to all the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you **today** to faithfully follow. (28:13)
11. You shall not stray from all the words which I command you **today** [neither] right nor left, to follow after other gods or to worship them. (28:14)
12. It shall be if you do not listen to the voice of the LORD your God, to faithfully follow all of His commandments and statutes which I command you **today**, then will come all these curses and [will] catch you. (28:15)
13. The LORD your God did not give you a heart to understand, eyes to see, or ears to hear until **today**. (29:3)

In fact, the word היום meaning “today” occurs more in the book of Deuteronomy (70) than it does in the other four books of the Five Books of Moses combined (37)! The thirteen occurrences in this week’s Torah portion is more times than in the books of Exodus (12), Leviticus (3) or Numbers (1).

So why is it that the book of Deuteronomy creates this litany - . . . היום . . . היום . . . היום – today . . . today . . . today? Two commentaries that come from רש"י (*Rashi*) on this week's reading may be enlightening. When Deuteronomy 26:16 says " היום הזה די אֲיָהֶיךָ מְצַוְנֶךָ, *This day, the Lord your God commands you,*" Rashi comments

היום הזה . . . בכל יום יהיו בעיניך חדשים, כאלו בו ביום נצטוית עליהם

This day . . . [means] every day it should be in your eyes as if you were just commanded regarding them."

And when Deut 27:9 says " היום הזה נהיית לעם, *today you became a nation*" Rashi opines

בכל יום יהיו בעיניך כאילו היום באת עמו בברית

Every day should be in your eyes as if you entered a covenant with God."

I think Rashi's “read” is a very poignant understanding of the litany of the word היום in Deuteronomy. After all, Deuteronomy is essentially the farewell address(es) of Moses. And like most, he is concerned that, as time passes, the memory of him, and the memory of the Jewish experience in the wilderness, will fade. People will forget the closeness of God in the wilderness – the revelation at Sinai, the manna from heaven, etc. Moses, as understood by Rashi, reminds us: Treat every day as a new day filled with God's commandments, and with the closeness of the Jews' relationship with God.

The message goes further: We need to see every day as an opportunity. We should always say " היום - Today is the day!" There is no need to wait for Yom Kippur. היום! Should you start at Rosh Hashanah? No! Today! And though we will start saying

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selichot next Saturday night, the time to begin repentance is . . . Today! It's time to step things up. To do more. To do better. It is time to learn a little bit more Torah. To do more *mitzvot*. It is time to do one more act of charity. היום! היום! היום!

It's time for us to tell God that we can't wait! We are ready to step closer to God today! היום תעמצנו (*hayom te'amsenu*) – *Strengthen us today* to study Your תורה (*Torah*)! היום תברכנו (*hayom tevar'chenu*) *Bless us today* with the opportunity, ability and desire to do מצוות (*Mitzvot*). היום תקבל ברחמים וברצון את תפלתנו (*hayom t'kabel berachamim uv'ratson et tefillatenu*) **Today**, *accept with mercy and willingness our prayers* so that we may be worthy of many more tomorrows!

Shabbat Shalom!

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