

## פרשת נצבים וילך

ויכתב משה את התורה הזאת ויתנה אל הכהנים בני לוי הנשאים את ארון ברית ה' ואל כל זקני ישראל.  
(לא' ט)

*Moshe wrote this Torah and gave it to the Kohanim, the sons of Levi, the bearers of the Aron of the covenant of Hashem, and to all the elders of Israel.*

Moshe continues to prepare the people for his parting. After handing over the mantle of leadership to Yehoshua, he assures us that the Torah would be transmitted faithfully and accurately to future generations. As Rashi and Ramban tell us, he wrote the entire Torah and handed the scroll to the Leviim and elders, for they would teach the nation and guarantee that the Torah would never be forgotten by the Jewish people.

Rav Meir Simcha uses our pasuk as an opportunity to present his unique understanding of מסורת התורה, the transmission of the Torah, both written and oral. He begins with a very interesting anecdote from ירושלמי יבמות: When R' Dosa ben Herkenis saw R' Elazar ben Azarya, he recited the verse from נער הייתי גם זקנתי ולא ראיתי צדיק נעזב, וזרעו מבקש, תהילים לז' כה *"I was young, I also aged, and I have not seen a righteous man forsaken and his seed seeking bread."* The Mefarshim explain that R' Dosa was referring to the premature aging of R' Elazar, who at the age of eighteen (נער) was already grey bearded (זקנתי), in order for him to be accepted by the older Rabbis. Others say he was referring to R' Elazar's leadership skills when he became Nasi; לחם can be a reference to Torah and R' Dosa was complimenting R' Elazar how during his reign "none of his children/subjects were lacking of לחם/Torah". The narrative concludes with R' Dosa telling us that "I recognize that R' Elazar is a tenth generation descendent of Ezra, for his eyes resemble Ezra's." End of story.

Rav Meir Simcha presents his understanding of this enigmatic piece of Gemara and begins with סנהדרין כא: where R' Yose says, "Ezra was worthy of having the Torah presented to Israel through him, had Moshe not preceded him...But even though it was not given through him, the script was changed by him, as it is stated (in Ezra), *'and the **changed writing** was written in Aramaic and expressed in Aramaic.'*" R' Yose explains that Ezra was allowed to introduce the new (Aramaic which was really Ashuris) script based on the exegetical understanding of the pasuk in דברים יז' יח *And (the king) shall write the **mishneh** of this Torah* i.e. the word mishneh can be interpreted as "changed," so that Moshe was "hinting to us" that the Torah contains a script that, if necessary, can be changed. Rav Meir Simcha explains that in truth, the Torah, the Words of Hashem, was given to a G-dly nation and rightfully should be studied only by those who lead lives on that higher spiritual plain. He reads this in an almost literal fashion from our pasuk ואל כל זקני ישראל... ויתנה אל הכהנים בני לוי... And it was precisely because of this that the original (Torah) script was Ivri, an ancient Hebrew script that was apparently only understood by scholars. Ezra realized, and this is well documented in ספר נחמיה where there are several accounts of the "halachic" ignorance of the Jewish people, that his generation did not have the ability to study Torah with the old script. Perhaps this was due to forgetfulness or the difficulties inherent in פיזור הגלות, the dispersal of the Jews in the Diaspora, he understood that unless something drastic was done, Torah would be lost from his

people. He therefore decided to utilize the more familiar Ashuris script and allow the masses to be re-acquainted with Torah study. As Rav Meir Simcha puts it: , ומוטב להגיע אל המטרה הנאותה, ולסבול ההזק המגיע even though there was a risk in introducing this new script, for it was possible that some might study Torah for its intellectual enjoyment with no interest in being transformed into בני תורה, it was worth taking in order to reach the lofty goal of spreading the words of the Torah. He was clearly successful, as we see the amount of Torah generated and disseminated during the Second Bais HaMikdash, and as we read the accolades given to him by חז"ל. Rav Meir Simcha continues and explains that R' Elazar ben Azarya's predecessor, Rabban Gamliel, believed in a very strict approach to Torah transmission. He constantly quoted the opinions of his illustrious family and how their words could not be second guessed-מאבות-אני מקובל. He wanted to fill his Yeshiva with an elite group of students-even if it meant that most would not be accepted into its halls. R' Elazar accession into leadership brought a drastic change to this. He opened the doors of the Yeshiva- כל הרוצה לכנוס! In general, his opinions in the Talmud are usually accompanied with explanations rather than directives. This user friendly approach is what Rav Meir Simcha believes R' Dosa was hinting at when he says: R' Elazar's eyes i.e. **his vision** as a leader, were similar to Ezra's. Visionaries, such as Ezra and R' Elazar ben Azarya, understand that at certain times adjustments need to be made that can be fraught with danger but with steadfast commitment and determination, and with סייעתא דשמיא, a generation can be transformed.

After concluding this piece, one gets the strong sense that the Meshech Chochma would have been on the roll call with those of our Gedolim who were encouraging Rav Meir Zlotowitz ע"ה and Rav Nosson Scherman יב"ל to undertake the colossal mission of translating Shas into our generation's "scripts". They were cognizant of the risks but Boruch Hashem, their tenacity paid off as literally all of us have been exposed to and benefitted from their wonderful work. Wishing everyone a year filled with tremendous growth and new insights in תורת ה'.

## כתיבה וחתימה טובה

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ישראל מנחם בן שלום ז"ל  
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