**[Divine Might – Parshat Nitzavim](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/divine-might-parshat-nitzavim)**

There are many Names of the Divine, but in the Torah, there are two that are most prominent. The first is *Elohim,* and the second is *Yod – Hei – Vav – Hei,* or*Hashem:*

י–ה–ו–ה  ,אלהימ

The Name *Elohim* is often associated with nature and Divine Might. We see this at the very beginning of the Torah, in the act of creation:

בְּרֵאשִׁ֖ית בָּרָ֣א אֱלֹהִ֑ים אֵ֥ת הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם וְאֵ֥ת הָאָֽרֶץ׃
*In the beginning of Elohim creating the heavens and the earth…*
- Genesis 1:1

Ancient peoples saw the forces of nature as powerful gods, also called *elohim,* and they rightly saw themselves as at the mercy of these gods. This is probably the origin of ritual sacrifice – the desire to appease the nature gods and gain their favor through sacrificial offerings.

Corresponding to these two Names, there were two major theological innovations the Torah brought into the world. The first was to use the word for these nature gods, *elohim,*to address the singular God, *Elohim*. The genius was that by using a plural word to describe the singular God, it expresses the idea that the One God is not the *only* god or even the most powerful god, but rather that the One God *includes* all the other gods; the One God is One because It includes everything – no thing is separate from It.

The second innovation was that unlike the nature gods who were appeased by sacrifices, this singular God is “appeased” by kindness. This new vision of the Divine as having a core ethical dimension is expressed in the Torah through the second Name, *Hashem.* We can see this in the story of Noah’s flood:

וַיַּ֣רְא יְהוָ֔ה כִּ֥י רַבָּ֛ה רָעַ֥ת הָאָדָ֖ם בָּאָ֑רֶץ וְכָל־יֵ֙צֶר֙ מַחְשְׁבֹ֣ת לִבּ֔וֹ רַ֥ק רַ֖ע כָּל־הַיּֽוֹם׃

*Hashem saw how great was human wickedness on earth, and how every desire of the thoughts of his heart nothing but evil, all day long.*

וַיִּנָּ֣חֶם יְהוָ֔ה כִּֽי־עָשָׂ֥ה אֶת־הָֽאָדָ֖ם בָּאָ֑רֶץ וַיִּתְעַצֵּ֖ב אֶל־לִבּֽוֹ׃

*And Hashem regretted making the human on the earth, and His heart was saddened.*

- Genesis 6:5-6

Not only is *Hashem* concerned with ethics, but *Hashem* has a heart that can be sad! But then, when the Divine carries out the destruction of humanity through the power of nature as the “great flood,” the Name switches back to *Elohim:*

וַיֹּ֨אמֶר אֱלֹהִ֜ים לְנֹ֗חַ קֵ֤ץ כָּל־בָּשָׂר֙ בָּ֣א לְפָנַ֔י כִּֽי־מָלְאָ֥ה הָאָ֛רֶץ חָמָ֖ס מִפְּנֵיהֶ֑ם וְהִנְנִ֥י מַשְׁחִיתָ֖ם אֶת־הָאָֽרֶץ׃

*Elohim said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.*

- Genesis 6:13

So, while *Elohim* is associated with nature and might, *Hashem* is associated with the heart, with goodness, and compassion.

Eventually, after the flood relents and Noah builds an altar, *Hashem* reappears:

וַיָּ֣רַח יְהוָה֮ אֶת־רֵ֣יחַ הַנִּיחֹחַ֒ וַיֹּ֨אמֶר יְהוָ֜ה אֶל־לִבּ֗וֹ לֹֽא־אֹ֠סִף לְקַלֵּ֨ל ע֤וֹד אֶת־הָֽאֲדָמָה֙ בַּעֲב֣וּר הָֽאָדָ֔ם כִּ֠י יֵ֣צֶר לֵ֧ב הָאָדָ֛ם רַ֖ע מִנְּעֻרָ֑יו וְלֹֽא־אֹסִ֥ף ע֛וֹד לְהַכּ֥וֹת אֶת־כָּל־חַ֖י כַּֽאֲשֶׁ֥ר עָשִֽׂיתִי׃

*Hashem smelled the pleasing aroma, and Hashem said in His Heart, “Never again will I doom the earth because of man, since the desires of the human heart mind are evil from their youth; nor will I ever again destroy every living being, as I have done.*

- Genesis 8:21

In Kabbalah, *Elohim* is associated with the *sefirah* of *Gevurah*, Strength, and *Hashem* is associated with *Tiferet*, Beauty, which is itself associated with *Rakhamim*, Compassion, as well as *Emet,* Truth.

Of course, these two Names are aspects of One Reality. We can see this most clearly in what happens next in the Noah story, because the promise that *Hashem* makes requires the power of *Elohim* to carry it out:

וַאֲנִ֕י הִנְנִ֥י מֵקִ֛ים אֶת־בְּרִיתִ֖י אִתְּכֶ֑ם וְאֶֽת־זַרְעֲכֶ֖ם אַֽחֲרֵיכֶֽם׃

*“I now establish My covenant/*brit *with you and your offspring to come…*

וְלֹֽא־יִכָּרֵ֧ת כָּל־בָּשָׂ֛ר ע֖וֹד מִמֵּ֣י הַמַּבּ֑וּל וְלֹֽא־יִהְיֶ֥ה ע֛וֹד מַבּ֖וּל לְשַׁחֵ֥ת הָאָֽרֶץ׃ …

*… never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”*

אֶת־קַשְׁתִּ֕י נָתַ֖תִּי בֶּֽעָנָ֑ן וְהָֽיְתָה֙ לְא֣וֹת בְּרִ֔ית בֵּינִ֖י וּבֵ֥ין הָאָֽרֶץ׃

*I have set My rainbow in the clouds, and it shall serve as a sign of the covenant/*brit*between Me and the earth.*

So, in order for the *Rakhamim,* the Compassion of *Hashem* to manifest, it needs to be allied with the *Gevurah,* the Strength of *Elohim,* through the concept of *brit –* covenant, commitment, promise, oath, or pact.

Applied practically to ourselves, this means we need the inner strength of *Gevurah,* the commitment not to be taken over by reactive forces within ourselves, to channel the*Rakhamim/*Compassion of *Tiferet.* The pure reactive *Gevurah* energy can be powerfully destructive, as in the story of the flood. But we can use that energy against itself, through the aid of making a *brit –* making a commitment to bring forth our potential for*Rakhamim.*

There is a hint in  the *parshah:*

אַתֶּ֨ם נִצָּבִ֤ים הַיּוֹם֙ כֻּלְּכֶ֔ם לִפְנֵ֖י יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֵיכֶ֑ם רָאשֵׁיכֶ֣ם שִׁבְטֵיכֶ֗ם זִקְנֵיכֶם֙ וְשֹׁ֣טְרֵיכֶ֔ם כֹּ֖ל אִ֥ישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵֽל׃

*You stand this day, all of you, before the Hashem your Divinity—your tribal heads, your elders and your officials, all the men of Israel…*

לְעָבְרְךָ֗ בִּבְרִ֛ית יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהֶ֖יךָ וּבְאָלָת֑וֹ אֲשֶׁר֙ יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֶ֔יךָ כֹּרֵ֥ת עִמְּךָ֖ הַיּֽוֹם׃

*…to enter into the covenant (BRIT) of Hashem your Divinity, and with its oaths (ALAH) which Hashem your Divinity seals with you this day…*

אלה – *ALAH* is an interesting word; it can mean “oath,” but also “curse,” as well as “to lament” or “mourn.”

(As in the curse that will come if you violate the oath, causing you to lament and mourn!)

But, it also means “goddess,” as well as “club/bat/cudgel,” hinting again at the old and mighty nature deities.

Lastly, it also means “these” – *eleh.*

The Zohar says that *eleh* (“these”) refers to the *sefirot*, which can be incorrectly interpreted to be separate deities. As a remedy to this dualistic view, the Zohar recommends a practice of inquiry in which one asks the question, *mi?* meaning, “who?”

Through the asking of “who,” we can come to realize the inner identity of all “these” different forces – *eleh* combines with *mi,* and becomes *Elohim –* “these” is revealed as One Reality. This is the essence of the *brit* of the Torah, to know the One, and not see Reality as merely a collection of separate entities.

But what does this really mean for us?

It means not living from ego, which is psychological identification with separateness. It means accepting Reality as it happens and living in loving service of the One, which is present manifest in and as all beings. But to do this, we need to be committed to it; we need to tap our inner *Gevurah* in order to overcome the forces of ego.

How do we do that?

First and foremost, we have to be *committed to it.* We have to make an inner *brit*(covenant)*,* an inner *alah* (oath)*,* to be conscious and not be taken over by the forces of separateness.

Then, we must constantly remember our *ALAH* (oath) to know that *ELEH* (these) are really*ELOHIM* (One Reality that includes all plurality), and that if we forget this and worship the*ELEH* instead, this will only create *ALAH* (suffering) for ourselves. This is *teshuvah,*returning to the One that is ever-present, returning to the Divine Compassion of our heart and the Divine Strength of our will to bring It forth…

***More on Nitzavim...***

[**Repairing the Road – Parshat Nitzavim**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/reparing-the-road-parshat-nitzavim)9/25/2019  [0 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/reparing-the-road-parshat-nitzavim%22%20%5Cl%20%22comments)

This past Sunday, my son and I drove up from Tucson to the Bay Area – about twelve hours of driving. Toward the end of the journey, it was getting late – I wasn’t sure if I could make it. It was around 12:00 am, and I wanted to push through. But the next thing I knew, the 75-mph traffic began getting slower and slower, eventually came to a complete stop before resuming at a barely moving pace.

After nearly an hour we came to the reason – workers were repairing the road. Of course, like all things, the road wears out; the pavement chips, breaks, and becomes dangerous. Like everything, it needs to be repaired.

And so it is with us as well.

It’s inconvenient to the pace that we’re accustomed to; we have deadlines, we have places to go. Oh the places we want to go! Our consciousness becomes accustomed to pointing toward the future; our thoughts and feelings tend to be directed at where we are going. This is natural and necessary to a degree, but if we are always barreling forward at 75 mph, we miss out on the actual nature of our consciousness; we miss out on the depths of who we are, beneath all those directional thoughts and feelings. We may sometimes have a temporary sense of “arrival,” but then it’s back to moving again, back to the next imagined end-point.

One problem with this is that over time, the road breaks down! Meaning, the movement of life leaves us injured and scarred. This too is fine and natural – but we need to slow down regularly, and even come to a complete standstill, so that the “workers” can make the *tikun*in our souls and bring us back to the Wholeness that we are, beneath all experience.

אַתֶּ֨ם נִצָּבִ֤ים הַיּוֹם֙ כֻּלְּכֶ֔ם לִפְנֵ֖י יְהוָ֣ה אֱלֹהֵיכֶ֑ם
*You stand today, all of you, before Existence, your Divinity…*

*Atem nitzavim hayom – You stand today* – that is, come to a “standstill,” today – meaning, in the present…

*Kulkhem – all of you –*that is, with your whole being; it’s not about merely sitting and be still physically. “All of you” means bring thought itself to a standstill…

*Lifnei Hashem Eloheikhem – before Existence, your Divinity –*that is, become aware of the underlying Being-ness before you, and know that it is not separate from the Divine consciousness that you are…

This Rosh Hashanah, may we renew our commitment to our *avodah,*to being *nitzavim*and coming to a “standstill” *hayom –*today and everyday. Let us make space for the Divine healer inherent within our own Being-ness to repair the “pavement” of our nervous systems, so that we can experience and embody the Wholeness that are beneath it all– *amein.*
​
[**Listen and Reveal – Parshat Nitzavim**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/listen-and-reveal-parshat-nitzavim)
9/6/2018 [1 Comment](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/listen-and-reveal-parshat-nitzavim#comments)

This week’s reading is *Parshat Nitzavim,* which means “standing.” It begins with Moses telling the Children of Israel about all the blessings that will come from following the right path, as well as the curses that will come from following the wrong path, and that in fact they *will* follow both right and wrong paths. But eventually, after all these ups and downs, this beautiful line describes what will happen next:

וְשַׁבְתָּ֞ עַד־יְהוָ֤ה אֱלֹהֶ֙יךָ֙ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ֣ בְקֹלֹ֔ו
*You will return to Existence, which is not separate from your own inner Divinity, and you will begin to listen to Its Voice…*

This prediction applies to each one of us; we can ask ourselves right now: *Ad matai? How long will I remain preoccupied with the dramas of life with all its ups and downs, before I Return?*

Behind all spiritual practices lies this one simple move– return to Reality, return to this moment. If you want to be free, if you want to realize your nature as wholeness, as peace, as joy, then be as the *nitzavim* – take your stand in your actual experience as it is, right now, being the space of awareness within which life unfolds. Be Present.

But if it’s so simple, why doesn’t everyone realize this right away?

Because the vast and infinitely superior reward that comes from Return to Presence is not always readily apparent. For many people, a whole lot of suffering has to come first before one is really motivated to find another way. Before that, Presence is meaningless.

So the real question is, have you suffered enough yet? How long until *you* Return?

And that’s where faith comes in. Return now; listen to the Voice of Reality as it speaks in this moment, and you may not feel anything special. Awakening comes when it comes, as an act of Grace. That’s why it says a few verses later:

וּמָ֨ל יְהוָ֧ה אֱלֹהֶ֛יךָ אֶת־לְבָבְךָ֖
*And Existence, which is your own inner Divinity, will circumcise your heart…*

We don’t “circumcise” our own hearts; the dropping away of all separation and the realization of peace and wholeness as your own nature comes to us by Grace. But we *can*prepare ourselves for it, we can open ourselves to it. And that’s what *Teshuvah,* Return to Presence, is all about. But if you need a dramatic experience to convince you, you might give up before your practice bears fruit.

So please, have faith and keep at it!

A disciple of Reb Mordechai of Lekhovitz had a business partner who was a *mitnagid,* an opponent of the Hassidic way. The disciple kept urging his partner to come see his master, Reb Mordechai, but his partner obstinately refused again and again. One day, when they happened to be in Lekhovitz on business, the partner allowed himself to be persuaded and agreed to go to the *rebbe’s* house for a *Shabbat* meal.

During the meal, the disciple saw his partner’s face light up with joy. When he asked him about it later, his partner said, “When the *rebbe* ate, he looked as holy and radiant as the*Kohen Gadol –* the High Priest – must have looked, making offerings in the ancient Temple!”

Later, the disciple went to his master, troubled in spirit, and asked his *rebbe* why his friend who hated the *hasidim* had such a wonderful experience on the first encounter, while he had not.

The master replied, “The *mitnagid* must see, but the *hasid* must have faith!

May we have the strength and faith to keep at our *teshuvah,* to return more deeply and frequently to Presence, and may this year bring new and unique opportunities to craft the vessels of our lives into conduits for the Divine Grace that yearns to get our attention.*Amein,* Good *Shabbos!*

[**Can't Stand It? Parshat Nitzavim
​**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/cant-stand-it)9/28/2016  [6 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/cant-stand-it%22%20%5Cl%20%22comments)

What happens when you can't stand something?

Ordinarily, there is a sense of "me" and the thing or person you "can't stand." Reality is split in two, and there is tension, contraction, stress.

How do you rise above this tension?

The Parshah begins:

*"Atem nitzavim hayom kulkhem...
​
"You all stand together today... from your hewer of wood to your carrier of water... to pass into the covenant...״*

What is a covenant?

A covenant is a special, intentional connection between two beings- a coming together of two, rather than a separation and tension.

How do you connect with the Divine?

*Nitzavim Hayom*-*Stand today-* meaning, take your stand in this moment.

When you "stand" your head is raised up- meaning, you can see all that is below- your body, your feelings, your thoughts. Use your head to be aware of yourself in this moment, rather than spinning off into judgments, fantasies, and opinions about what you can't stand! Instead, take your stand in this moment.

*From your hewer of wood to your carrier of water-*

It doesn't matter what your identity is, what roles you play, what your opinions are. On the level of awareness, we are all the same transcendent presence.

Then it says:

*​"L'ma'an hakim ot'kha hayom-
"In order to establish you today..."*

That is, establish yourself in the present moment! Make Presence a way of living, not merely a technique or occasional practice.

When your presence burns brightly like the sun, far above your opinions and yet intimately aware of them, then the One Being looks through your eyes, seeing Itself everywhere. Then there is no longer "you" connecting with "God," but there is simply Being, shining forth from everything. From that state, the love and wisdom to make peace and "stand with others" becomes available...
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**​**[**Watch Me Ney Ney?? Parshat Nitzavim**
​](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/watch-me-ney-ney-parshat-nitzavim)9/9/2015  [8 Comments](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/watch-me-ney-ney-parshat-nitzavim%22%20%5Cl%20%22comments)

Last week I took my 3-year-old girl and nine-year-old boy out for dinner, along with my son’s nine-year-old friend.

As we sat in the vegan Japanese restaurant waiting for noodle soups and avocado rolls, the friend was singing some popular song, trying to get my daughter to sing along and do the dance moves that apparently went with it.

“Watch me whip! Watch me ney-ney!” he sang, showing her how to wave her arm in a certain way that I assume is from a video he saw.

I had never heard the song before, and something about the way he was doing the arm wave and singing “watch me ney-ney” seemed a little off to me. I don’t want to say it sounded obscene, but not knowing what “ney-ney” meant, I was suspicious. Was this appropriate for a three year old?

I wasn’t comfortable with it, so I told him to please stop.

The next day, I went to pick up my daughter from her Jewish preschool. When I got there, all the kids were being led in a dance by their teacher.

What was the dance?

“Watch me whip! Watch me ney-ney!”

The song blasted from the stereo and all the kids were doing the moves. I couldn’t believe it. Apparently her teacher thought the song was perfect for preschoolers!

Later on, I told my wife the story and we laughed so hard. The next day, she told the whole story to the teacher, who also laughed and said, “Yeah I thought the song was a little strange too, but I learned it from the *Rebbetzen*- the rabbi’s wife!”

Our narratives about reality are not the same as actual reality. Was the song appropriate or inappropriate? We had different narratives about it, but I still have no idea what "nay nay" means.

Similarly, we have all kinds of narratives about who we are and who other people are, but ultimately they are just stories, mental fabrications. The roles we play, the scripts we run, the functions we fulfill, are not what we actually are.

So what are we?

This week’s reading opens with Moses’ words to the Children of Israel:

*“Atem nitzavim hayom-*
You are standing today…”

He then goes on to describe all the different identities of the people who are “standing”: the heads of the tribes, the elders, the officers, the men, the women, the children and the stranger, ending with the sweepingly inclusive description-

*“…meikhoteiv eitzekha ad sho’eiv meimekha-*
From the hewer of your wood to the carrier of your water.”

In other words, all the different identities are standing together.

What does it mean to “stand today”?

It means to take your stand in the present. When you stand in the present- awake, still, and attentive- all of your identities and roles are temporarily suspended. When you stand in the present, you are pure potential, pure aliveness, a field of awareness encompassing a human form.

Why are they *standing today?*
It goes on to say,

*“L’ovrekha bivrit Hashem Elohekha-*
To cross over into the covenant of Being, which is your own Divinity…”

All identities, in the end, are just roles, just stories. It doesn’t matter if you are a hewer of wood or a carrier of water. When you simply stand, you stand as Being, as the Divine Being that you are.

I remember one time a visiting rabbi came to our shul and gave a talk for a Shabbat service. When he stood up to talk, he first stood in silence. He looked around the room, making eye contact with everyone. The silence was powerful, and lasted about 3 or 4 minutes.

Finally, he began to talk. His teaching was very good, but the truth is, it was nothing compared to his silence. When he stood in silence and connected with everyone in the room one by one, there was a shift. That ineffable quality of being- the quality that some call “Divine”- was palpable.

The roles we play, on the other hand, have the potential to divide us. Our roles can create competition. Our stories can become arguments over who is right, over who has the “truth”.

The solution? *Stand together.*

We need not get rid of our roles, but we do need to choose roles that express our basic oneness, our inner Divinity. But to do that, we need to be committed to it. That’s the *brit,*the covenant.

Commitment to transformation, to truly embody who you want to be, may seem difficult. But, as the Torah reminds us later in the same *parshah,*

*“Ki karov eilekha hadavar me’od-*
this matter is very near to you-
*b’fikha uvilvavkha la’asoto-*
in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.”

A shopkeeper once complained to Reb Moshe of Kobrin that his neighbor, who sold exactly the same goods as he did, always made a killing, while customers just passed on by his shop.

“I can promise big profits to you, too,” said the *tzaddik,* “but only on the condition that when you see your neighbor doing well, you must thank *Hashem* for his success. Something like this- Thank God for the rich livelihood of my neighbor!

"It may be difficult to say this wholeheartedly at the beginning, but as you train your mouth to say the words, in time they will find their way into your heart as well- until in fact you will be saying them with all your heart.

"For, in the verse- ‘in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it’- we first find ‘in your mouth’, and only after is it written ‘in your heart.’”

If you want your life to express your inner Divinity, rather than merely repeat old scripts and narratives, it’s important to consciously construct your narratives- don’t let them construct you!

Choose who you want to be, write it down and repeat it often.

And, to tap into the transformative power that makes this possible, you must go beyond *all* narrative, and stand in the silence of pure potential. That’s meditation.

As we come into *Shabbat Nitzavim,* the Sabbath of Standing, and then into the New Year beginning Sunday night, may we renew our connection with the Divinity of Being. May we “crown” Reality as “King” over all our mental narratives. May we know ever more deeply the sweetness and bliss of what we truly are, and the power and potential of what’s possible when we stand together.

*L’shanah tovah tikatevu-*
May you be inscribed for a good year-
And may you consciously inscribe yourself as an expression of your deepest potential!

love,
brian yosef