

You are standing today, all of you. (29:9)

Rashi (quoting from the *Midrash*) explains the juxtaposition of *Atem nitzavim*, “You are standing” upon the previous *parshah*, *Ki Savo*, which detailed ninety-eight *kelalos*, imprecations, that would impact the nation if they do not listen to Hashem's word. When *Klal Yisrael* heard the curses that would befall them for stepping out of line, they said, “Who can bear these?” Moshe *Rabbeinu* consoled them; “You are (still) standing today. Although you have catalyzed Hashem's intense anger, He has not totally destroyed you, and you exist (standing) before Him today.” The *Midrash* begs elucidation. If the purpose of the *kelalos* was to put the fear of G-d into the nation, why downplay them saying, “You are still standing”? The purpose is to provide them with a wake-up call, to inform them that, in no uncertain terms, their vile behavior will not be tolerated. They would have to pay for their sins. Why allay their fears by telling them: “Do not worry: You have been far from good, yet, you are still here!” Furthermore, why did their faces turn pallid when they heard the *tochachah*, rebuke? All they would have to do to prevent the curses from affecting them would be not to sin. The curses were but a warning, a reminder of what would occur if they rebelled. All they had to do was adhere to the Torah's program, and all would be good.

Horav Tuvia Lisitzen, zl (*talmid muvhak* of *Alter m'Slabodka*), explains that *Klal Yisrael* was fully aware of their father/son relationship with Hashem. They were acutely aware of the responsibilities of being a “son,” and they understood what a loving father provides for his children. Their question was whether this father/son relationship was contingent upon their good behavior, or would Hashem consider and treat them as His sons even if they were to err and even if they were to rebel? After all, a father tolerates his child, regardless of his son's behavior. One does not drop his child because his demeanor does not conform with his father's mores. When the nation heard the ninety-eight grave punishments which would befall them if they acted out of character, they feared that Hashem did not relate to them as a father relates to his child.

Moshe *Rabbeinu* mollified their concerns when he pointed out to them – “You are still standing.” *Klal Yisrael's* behavior in the wilderness – from simple *kvetching*, to a lack of gratitude, to open rebellion – would test the relationship of any leader, but not a father. A father tolerates the most egregious behavior. Veritably, he will render strict discipline, but, since the subject of his discipline is his son – he will always remain his son, his deplorable behavior notwithstanding. *Klal Yisrael* rightfully deserved serious punishment, but their relationship with Hashem would not be severed.

I close with an aphorism attributed to the *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, which should provide us with food for thought: “The way of the world is such that parents feel the pain of their children, but the children are oblivious to the suffering of their parents. Likewise, Hashem feels our pain, but we are blind to His misery.”