

"This day you became a people (nation)."

Horav Elchonon Wasserman Z"l explains the distinction between the term "*am*" and the term "*goy*", both of which are commonly translated as "nation". "*Goy*" connotes an autonomous nation which is settled in its own land under its own governance. In contrast, "*am*" implies a people or large group of individuals who speak the same language and maintain a common culture. They comprise a "nation" despite their lack of their own land.

This differentiation clarifies Moshe's declaration to *Bnei Yisrael*, "*Today you have become an am*", for they had accepted the *Torah*, which was written in seventy languages on the various stones. Moshe's statement suggests that *Bnei Yisrael* are a nation by virtue of the *Torah* which accompanies them throughout the entire world. Even when they are exiled from their land, their common heritage will be the *Torah*. Through *Am Yisrael's* acceptance of the *Torah*, they became a nation whose common denominator is their religion, founded entirely upon the precepts of the *Torah*. This all encompassing bond is our birthright and only license to exist as a nation.