

**There are 4 very enigmatic sayings in this week's parsha**

**They raise difficult questions**

**First the parsha says** "You are all standing this day before the Lord, your God the leaders of your tribes, your elders and your officers, every man of Israel,

your young children, your women, and your convert who is within your camp both your woodcutters and

your water drawers" **Who is standing before God? Apparently everyone, leaders followers, all**

**occupations, all social classes, all ages. Those born Jewish and those who converted to Judaism.**

**Everyone together. Seemingly the people are one despite these differences.**

**Second the parsha says,** "But not only with you am I making this covenant and this oath,

but with those standing here with us today before the Lord, our God, and [also] with those who are not here with us, this day."

**Who is standing before God that day, not only the people of the time, but the people of all time?**

**Does that imply us? That we were standing there as well at the edge of the desert ready to enter the**

**land of Israel and that we are also subject to this covenant that if we obey the law and listen to G-d**

**we will inherit the land and live peacefully and abundantly within it and if we do not we will be**

**expelled from the land but if we return to the law and obedience to God we again will inherit the**

**land?**

**Third, the parsha says** "The hidden things belong to the Lord, our God, but the revealed things apply to us and to our children forever: that we must fulfill all the words of this Torah."

**What is hidden here? The message is fairly clear. The land is ours if we obey and if we do not the**

**land will be taken from us. Even if it is taken from us we have a chance to return to it if we make**

**tshuva. Perhaps what is hidden is when and under what circumstances this return will take place.**

**Fourth the parsha says** “For this commandment which I command you this day, is not concealed from you, nor is it far away.....It is not in heaven,.....Nor is it beyond the sea,

Rather,[this] thing is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can fulfill it.”

**Does this suggest that we should not speculate when redemption will come, that G-d has his own timetable, and meanwhile our job is to do the commandments here and now.**

**Moshe is handing out the carrot of ultimate redemption but saying for now we just have to buckle down and do what is right in front of us.**

**The Parsha is pulling us in many directions.**

**First, it is calling on us to expand the scope of the children of Israel. But how far should that scope be expanded. Does it include the descendants of Spanish Marrones? Does it include those with only one Jewish grandfather? Does it include those who do not know the difference between an aleph and bet? Does it include atheists and non-believers and other categories that the Rambam excluded from the people of Israel? Does it include those who have a different color or whose gender is different than our own?**

**Second, if everyone is bound by this covenant, does it mean that we cannot make a new covenant with God and redevote and rededicate ourselves to him in a different way. There were altogether six covenants in the Bible. 1. The acceptance of the Torah in Exodus 2. The reacceptance of the Torah after the breaking of the Luchot. These were covenants with the children of Israel who exited Egypt. This is the third covenant and it is with their descendants prior to entering the promised land 4. The covenant at Shechem made Joshua, 5. The covenant made by Ezekial. And 6. The covenant made by Nechemiah.**

**Do all these different covenants mean that every generation has its own right to make a covenant with God? Some say that the Jews who were expelled from Spain made a new covenant with God.**

Abarbanel suggests that it so. Some say that the Maharal made what amounts new a covenant of Ashkenazac Jewry on the threshold of modernity. If we were make a new covenant of what would it consist? Of the groups I previously mentioned would we call on any of them to be a part of our covenant? What would we commit to and what would we expect on the part of God in return? Would we wish for peace, tranquility, and happiness for us and the land of Israel in exchange for our rededicating ourselves to our people and to our religion?

If we were indeed standing there when the covenant of entering the land was sealed, then what obligations does it impose on us today? Is our obligation to celebrate every day that after almost 2000 years of wandering we have seen a return to Israel as Moshe prophesizes in today's parsha.

Third, if it is hidden and secret to everyone but God, then should we stop speculating about God's plans for redemption, should we stop wondering about God's justice and the way he works in the world, stop considering the awful plight of past persecution and mass murder, and not be fully aware of the anti-semitic threats masked as anti-Israel attacks that we hear today? Surely it is hard not to be baffled and perplexed by what has happened and what we see happening around us? Should we not mystified and confounded by the very strange presidential election and the choices we have in front of us? Are these just the secrets of God and our job is to just fulfill the words of the Torah however best we understand them?

Fourth, if we cannot speculate then is all that we can do is to carry out on a daily the Godly and ungodly unfortunately in some instances tasks that are in front of us. We cannot ask too many questions. The world is a mystery. It defies our understanding. Our job is to which God command us then. It, is not concealed from of far away.....It is not in heaven,....Nor is it beyond the sea, Rather,[it is very close to in our mouths and in hearts, so that we can do it. But how close is it to us? If we rely on what we say and what is our hearts alone how much progress in life will we actually make?

**I leave you with questions. I wish I had answers. I wish I knew exactly what a new covenant with God would mean for us today standing here in our shul. I wish I knew exactly what should be in the covenant and what it should say. I wish I could stop wandering and accept that the secrets belong to God. I wish I could just focus on what is right in front of me and carry out what I am called to do.**

**Shabbat Shalom and have a happy and healthy new year.**