SUMMARY OF NITSABIM-VAYELEKH

This Shabbat we read two Parashiyot together: Nitsabim and Vayelekh.

EXILE

As Moshe's life draws to a close, he gathers the entire people of Israel, the men, women, and children of the new generation, to reaffirm the Covenant (berit) with HaShem that had been made forty years earlier at Mount Sinai, where it was established that the people of Israel is God's nation. Moshe reminded them that this Covenant would endure for all generations, and warned them not to be tempted by the idolatrous way of life they had seen in Egypt, among the nations they met on their journey through the desert, and among those they would find in the land of Canaan. Moshe warned the people of their collective responsibility, and told them that if they did not follow God's path, they would not be able to remain in the land of Israel and would be exiled because of their sins.

TESHUBA (= RETURN TO ISRAEL)

This remarkable section of the Torah also foresees that, in the end, from exile, the people of Israel will return to God with all their heart, and He will help them come back to Israel from the farthest corners of the earth and restore them to the land of their ancestors, where they will live under His protection and with His blessing. When HaShem gathers the exiles of His people, the Jews will serve Him again and will be blessed with abundance in the work of their hands, in the fruit of their womb, of their land, and of their livestock.

THE TORAH IS WITHIN REACH

Moshe urged the people to follow the precepts of the Covenant (= the Torah), telling them that it "is not beyond you, nor is

it out of your reach. It is not in heaven… nor across the sea… rather, it is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can fulfill it." Moshe tells the people of Israel that they are free to choose between good and evil, life and death. Their choice will determine whether or not they receive HaShem's blessings. Moshe implored the people of Israel to choose life.

MOSHE'S LAST DAYS

Moshe informs the people that he is now 120 years old and will not be allowed to cross the Jordan River to accompany them into the land of Israel. Instead, Yehoshua will lead them, and HaShem will go before them and destroy their enemies in the conquest of Canaan. Moshe urged the Israelites to be strong and not to fear their enemies. Moshe summoned Yehoshua and told him to be strong and courageous, because HaShem would go before him and would not abandon him.

Then Moshe wrote down the entire Torah, the Five Books, and handed it to the Kohanim (priests) and the elders of Israel. Moshe commanded the people to gather every seven years, during the festival of Sukkot, all the men, women, and children, to hear the king read the Torah in public. (Over time, it was established that the Torah would be read publicly every Monday, Thursday, and Shabbat, in the morning and in the afternoon, and also on the festivals.)

A FINAL WARNING

HaShem commanded Moshe to enter the Ohel Moed together with Yehoshua. HaShem appeared to both of them and told them that in the future the Jewish people would abandon God's path, betray the Covenant, and follow pagan gods. At that time, HaShem would hide His face, that is, His protection, and they would be left at the mercy of their enemies. Therefore HaShem says: "Write down this song," which will be a testimony in their mouths, so that they remember that when God is not

protecting them, it is not because He does not exist, but because the people have distanced themselves from Him. That song is next week’s Torah reading, Shabbat Shuba: Parashat Haazinu.

THE TORAH IS RECEIVED BY THE PEOPLE

Moshe took the newly completed Torah scroll and handed it to the Levites. He instructed them to place it next to the Ark that held the Tablets. Then Moshe gathered the entire nation to hear the song, in which he calls upon heaven and earth as witnesses that the Jewish people were warned about the consequences of their actions.