

אור החיים הקדוש • האזינו • שני

Explanatory English · Line-by-Line Edition

HA'AZINU · 2ND ALIYAH

The Hebrew is the original Ohr HaChaim. Each passage is paired with its AI-assisted explanatory English, beside it on wide pages and beneath it on smaller screens. Brief clarifications are marked within the English. In plain words and Lemaaseh are separate AI-assisted study aids.

פסוק ז

Deuteronomy 32:7

זְכוֹר יָמוֹת עוֹלָם בֵּינוֹ שָׁנוֹת דּוֹר-וָדוֹר שֶׁאֵל אָבִיךָ וַיִּגְדֶּךָ זְקֵנֶיךָ
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָךְ:

Remember the days of old, Consider the years of many generations; Ask thy father, and he will declare unto thee,
Thine elders, and they will tell thee.

אור החיים הקדוש

AI-assisted explanatory translation

Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 32:7:1

Remember the days of old. Moshe presents four distinct directives here, corresponding to the four descriptions of Hashem's relationship with us that he mentioned in the previous verse (Deuteronomy 32:6). Corresponding to his statement there, "Is He not your Father?" which refers to Hashem as the Creator, Moshe says here, "Remember the days of old." This refers to the six days of Creation, where one will find that He is indeed the Maker and Creator of all.

And corresponding to his statement there, "Who acquired you?" which refers to the Exodus from Egypt and the other kindnesses through which He acquired us as His own, Moshe says here, "Consider the years of many generations." This means one should contemplate what Hashem did during the years of two specific generations: the generation that left Egypt, and the fourth generation that entered the Land of Israel. Through studying these, you will recognize His deeds for the Jewish people, through which He acquired you.

זְכוֹר יָמוֹת עוֹלָם. אָמַר אַרְבַּע חֲלוּקוֹת כְּנֻגָּד
אַרְבַּעַה דְּבָרִים שֶׁאָמַר בַּפֶּסוּק שֶׁלִּפְנֵי זֶה.
כְּנֻגָּד אָמְרוּ "הֲלֹא הוּא אָבִיךָ" שֶׁרָמַז בּוֹ
שֶׁהוּא הַבּוֹרֵא, אָמַר "זְכוֹר יָמוֹת עוֹלָם"
שֶׁהֵם שֵׁשֶׁת יָמֵי בְרָאשִׁית, שֶׁם יִמָּצָא כִּי הוּא
הַיוֹצֵר הוּא הַבּוֹרֵא.

וְכֻנָּגַד אָמְרוּ "קִנְיָה" שֶׁרָמַז לִיצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם
וּשְׂאָר הַטּוֹבוֹת שֶׁבָּהֶם קָנָה אוֹתָנּוּ, אָמַר
"בֵּינוֹ שָׁנוֹת דּוֹר וָדוֹר" שֶׁיִּתְבּוֹנֵן בְּמָה שֶׁפָּעַל
ה' בְּשָׁנִים שֶׁל שְׁנֵי דוֹרוֹת, שֶׁהֵם דּוֹר הַיּוֹצֵא
מִמִּצְרַיִם וְדוֹר רַבִּיעִי הַנִּכְנָס לָאָרֶץ, וּבָהֶם
יִכִּיר מַעֲשָׂיו יִתְבָּרַךְ לְעַם יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁבָּהֶם
קָנָה.

And corresponding to his statement there, "He made you," which refers to the lofty spiritual elevation we explained, that He placed His Divine Presence among us and granted us prophecy, Moshe says here, "Ask your father, and he will declare it to you." "Your father" in this context refers to the prophets, as Chazal have explained in the Sifrei.

וּכְנִיחַ אָמְרוּ "עָשָׂה" שֶׁהוּא תִקּוּן עֲלִיּוֹן
שֶׁפִּרְשָׁנוּ בּוֹ שְׁנֵתָן שְׂכִינָתוֹ בְּתוֹכֵנוּ וְנָבִיא
אוֹתָנוּ, אָמַר "שֶׂאֵל אָבִיךָ וְיַגִּידָהּ" – אָבִיךָ
הֵם הַנְּבִיאִים, וְכֵן פִּרְשִׁיהָ רַבּוֹתֵינוּ זְכוֹרֵהֶם
לְבִרְכָּהּ (ספרי).

And corresponding to "and established you," which we explained as referring to the preparations for the World to Come, Moshe says here, "your elders, and they will tell you." This refers to the Sages of Israel, who understand the preparation for and the attainment of the World to Come; they will tell you of these eternal matters.

וּכְנִיחַ "וַיִּכְנֶנֶךָ" שֶׁפִּרְשָׁנוּהָ עַל הַכְּנוּת
עוֹלָם הַבָּא, אָמַר "זִקְנֶיךָ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לָךְ" –
פְּרוֹשׁ הֵם חֲכָמֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמְּפִירִים בְּהַכְּנֵת
הַדָּבָר וְהַמוֹשָׁג לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, הֵם יֹאמְרוּ לָךְ.

Original Ohr HaChaim Hebrew on Sefaria

AI-assisted study aids · Deuteronomy 32:7

בְּפִשְׁטוּת · In plain words

The Ohr HaChaim explains that the four directives in this verse, remembering the days of old, contemplating the generations, asking one's father, and consulting the elders, directly correspond to the four descriptions of Hashem's relationship with Israel in the preceding verse. "Remembering the days of old" points to Hashem as Creator ("your Father"); "contemplating the generations" points to the Exodus and conquest of the Land ("Who acquired you"); "asking your father" refers to consulting the prophets about our spiritual elevation ("He made you"); and "consulting the elders" refers to learning from the Sages about the ultimate purpose of the World to Come ("and established you").

לְמַעַשֶׂה · Lemaaseh

We can deepen our relationship with Hashem by actively engaging in the four areas of study outlined by the Ohr HaChaim: studying the wonders of Creation, reflecting on the historical miracles of our redemption, learning the words of the prophets, and absorbing the teachings of our Sages regarding the ultimate purpose of life in the World to Come.

בְּהִנָּחֵל עֲלֵיוֹן גּוֹיִם בְּהַפְרִידוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם יַצֵּב גְּבֻלַּת עַמִּים לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the borders of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel.

אור החיים הקדוש

AI-assisted explanatory translation

Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 32:8:1

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance: This means that when Hashem, blessed be He, distributed the nations as inheritances to the supernal guardian angels, it demonstrated that they are of lesser importance to Him. He did not wish for them to be associated directly with His own Name, and so He placed them under the authority of these supernal ministers.

בְּהִנָּחֵל עֲלֵיוֹן גּוֹיִם. פְּרוּשׁ, כְּשֶׁהִנָּחֵל ה' בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת הַגּוֹיִם לְשָׂרֵי מַעְלָה, זֶה יְגִיד אֲשֶׁר הֵם פְּחוּתִים אֶצְלוֹ, אֲשֶׁר לֹא רָצָה שִׁיתְּכֻנּוּ לְשֵׁמוֹ, וְנִתְּנָם לְשָׂרֵי מַעְלָה:

Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 32:8:2

When He separated the children of men: This means that Hashem did not hand over all the nations to a single guardian angel. Instead, He separated them and assigned a specific portion to each individual minister. The manner of this division, when He set the borders of the peoples, was according to the number of the children of Israel. To understand this, you must know that all of Hashem's creations are structured with one corresponding to another, representing good and evil. All the souls of created beings were planted by Hashem from two primary trees: one good tree and one evil tree.

בְּהַפְרִידוֹ בְּנֵי אָדָם. פְּרוּשׁ, שֶׁלֹּא מָסַר ה' כָּל הָאוֹמוֹת בְּיַד שָׂר אֶחָד, אֲלֵא הַפְרִידָם וְנָתַן חֶלֶק לְכָל שָׂר וְשָׂר. וְאוֹפֵן הַחַלּוּקָה שֶׁעָשָׂה בָּהֶם כְּשִׁיִּצֵּב גְּבוּלָם הִיָּתָה לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. פְּרוּשׁ, יֵשׁ לָהּ לְדַעַת כִּי כָל מַעֲשֵׂה ה' עָשָׂה זֶה לְעוֹמֶת זֶה וְטוֹב וְרָע, וְכָל נִפְשׁוֹת שֶׁבְּנִבְרָאִים נִטְעָם ה' מִשְׁנֵי אֵילָנוֹת: אֵילָן אֶחָד טוֹב וְאֶחָד רָע.

The good tree is Adam HaRishon, the first man, while the evil tree is Samael, the evil spiritual counterpart, called adam beliyaal, the corrupt man. When Adam HaRishon sinned and evil became mixed with good, the offspring of Adam HaRishon began to produce corrupt souls as well. This continued until a single pure soul emerged, which included within it all the holy souls, thereby separating out the good tree anew. This soul was our father Yaakov, peace be upon him.

This is why Chazal teach in Bava Metzia 84a and the Zohar, Volume 3, page 244a, that the beauty of our father Yaakov was a reflection of the beauty of Adam HaRishon. Understand these deep matters. This holy tree contains seventy branches, which correspond to the seventy souls of Yaakov's family who descended to Egypt. Therefore, when Hashem separated the nations, He set their borders according to the number of the children of Israel, establishing exactly seventy nations to correspond to the seventy branches of holiness.

Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 32:8:3

The purpose of this arrangement is so that each specific aspect of every holy branch should rule over its corresponding counterpart in the realm of evil. This is the inner meaning of the verse in Mishlei 5:5, Her feet go down to death, which teaches that the feet of holiness tread upon the heads of the impure forces. Consequently, the branches of Yaakov rule and reign over the nations.

אֵילָן הַטּוֹב הוּא אָדָם הָרִשּׁוֹן, אֵילָן הָרָע
הוּא ס"מ אָדָם בְּלִיעַל. וְכִשְׁחָטָא אָדָם
הָרִשּׁוֹן וְנִתְעָרַב רַע בְּטוֹב, חֲזָרוּ לְהִיט
יוֹצְאִים מֵהוֹלָדֶת אָדָם הָרִשּׁוֹן גַּם נַפְשׁוֹת
רָעוֹת, עַד שֶׁיֵּצְאָה נַפֶּשׁ אַחַת טְהוֹרָה שְׁבָה
כָּלִילוֹת כָּל הַנְּשָׁמוֹת הַקְּדוֹשׁוֹת, וְנִתְבָּרַר
הָאֵילָן הַטּוֹב מִחֻדָּשׁ, וְזֶה הוּא יַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ
עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם.

וְלָזֶה אָמְרוּ (בבא מציעא פד.; זוהר חלק ג
רמד.) שׁוֹפְרִיָה דִּיעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ מַעֲיֵן שׁוֹפְרִיָה
דְּאָדָם קִדְמָאָה, וְהָבִין הַדְּבָרִים. וְאֵילָן זֶה יֵשׁ
בּוֹ שִׁבְעִים עֲנָפִים, וְהֵם שִׁבְעִים נַפְשׁוֹת שֶׁיֵּרְדּוּ
לְמִצְרַיִם. וְאֲשֶׁר עַל כֵּן כָּאֲשֶׁר הִפְרִיד ה'
הָאוֹמוֹת, הָצִיב גְּבוּלָם לְמִסְפַּר בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל,
עָשָׂה מֵהֶם שִׁבְעִים כְּנָגֵד שִׁבְעִים עֲנָפֵי
הַקְּדוּשָׁה.

וְהַכּוֹנֵן בָּזֶה, כִּדִּי שֶׁתְּהִיָּה כָּל בְּחִינָה וּבְחִינָה
שֶׁל כָּל עֲנַף מַעֲנֵפֵי הַקְּדוּשָׁה מוֹשְׁלֵת עַל
שְׁכִנְגֻדָּה בְּחֵלֶק הָרָע, וְזֶה סוּד (משלי ה:ה)
"רַגְלֶיהָ יוֹרְדוֹת מוֹת", שֶׁרַגְלִים שֶׁל הַקְּדוּשָׁה
דּוֹרְכִים עַל רָאשֵׁי הַקְּלָפָה, וְנִמְצְאִים עֲנָפֵי
יַעֲקֹב שׁוֹלְטִים וּמוֹלְכִים עַל הָאֹמוֹת.

The next verse then states, For Hashem's portion is His people, which explains the reason for this setup. Since the nation Hashem chose to rule over directly is Israel, He designed this system to elevate and give the children of Israel dominion over all the nations. Through this, when He rules over Israel, He effectively rules over the entire world.

The phrase, Hashem's portion is His people, refers specifically to Israel after they received the Torah, as they were then fully designated as the people of Hashem. The expression, Yaakov is the lot of His inheritance, uses the word chevel, meaning a rope, to signify the primary cord of the inheritance. This relates directly to what I have already pointed out regarding the rabbinic teaching in Bava Metzia 84a that the beauty of Yaakov reflects the beauty of Adam HaRishon.

Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 32:8-4

He offers another explanation based on two levels of souls. Some come from a higher spiritual world, and these are described as "Hashem's portion," a portion from Hashem, so to speak. Others come from the place called nachalas Shaddai, "the inheritance of Shaddai," and these are described by "Yaakov, the cord of His inheritance." For clarity, the author is distinguishing spiritual sources; "so to speak" marks the limits of describing this relationship in human language.

The Torah is precise in using the word chevel, which means a rope, to hint at a profound concept revealed by the masters of Kabbalah. Every living soul in a person is connected by a spiritual cord to its source. This cord extends from the nostrils and remains bound to its supernal root above, and through this cord the soul draws its life force.

וְאָמַר "כִּי חֵלֶק ה' עָמוֹ" פְּרוּשׁ טַעַם לָזֶה, לְהִיּוֹת שְׁהָאֵמָה אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר לוֹ ה' שִׁיְהִיָּהּ הוּא הַמּוֹשֵׁל עָלֶיהָ הֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל, לָזֶה נִתְּכּוֹן ה' וְהַמְּלִיךְ וְנִשְׂא אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל כָּל הָאֻמוֹת, וּבָזָה כְּאֲשֶׁר הוּא מוֹלִיךְ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל הֵנָּה הוּא מוֹלִיךְ עַל כָּל הָעוֹלָם כָּלּוּ.

וְאָמְרוּ "חֵלֶק ה' עָמוֹ" יְכוֹן אֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֵר שֶׁקִּבְּלוּ הַתּוֹרָה שְׂאֵז יִקְרְאוּ בְּשֵׁם עַם ה'. וְאָמְרוּ "עֵקֶב חֶבֶל" פְּרוּשׁ הַחֶבֶל שֶׁהוּא רֹאשׁ הַנֶּחֱלָה, וְהוּא מֵה שֶׁהֶעִירוּתֶיהָ אֵלָיו בְּרָמָז אֲמָרָם זְכוּרָנָם לְבָרְכָהּ (בבא מציעא פד.) שׁוּפְרִיָּה דִּיעֶקֶב וְכוּ':

עוֹד יְכוֹן לוֹמַר, לְהִיּוֹת שְׂשִׁישׁ שְׁתֵּי בְּחִינּוֹת בְּנִשְׁמוֹת: יֵשׁ שְׁבָאָה מְעוֹלָם עָלֵיוֹ, וְלָזֶה יֵאמַר "חֵלֶק ה'" – פְּרוּשׁ חֵלֶק מֵה' בְּרוּךְ הוּא כְּבִיכּוֹל, וְיֵשׁ נִפְשׁוֹת שְׁבָאוֹת מִמָּקוֹם הַנִּקְרָא נַחַלַת שֹׁדִי, וְלָזֶה יִקְרָא יַעֲקֹב "חֶבֶל נַחַלָּתוֹ".

וְדִקְדַּק לוֹמַר "חֶבֶל" לְרָמֵז עֲנִיָּן גָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר גָּלוּ יוֹדְעֵי חוֹן, כִּי כָּל נִפְשׁ הַחַיּוּנִי שְׁבָאָדָם יֵשׁ לָהּ חוּט אֶחָד דְּבוּק עִם שְׂרָשָׁהּ, וְהוּא יוֹצֵא מֵהַנְּחִירִים וְדְבוּק בְּשֶׁרְשׁוֹ לְמַעַלָּה, וּמִשָּׁם יוֹנֶקֶת הַנִּפְשׁ לְחַיּוּת.

Regarding the soul of a wicked person, the verse in Bamidbar 15:31 says, That soul shall utterly be cut off, meaning that Hashem cuts off this connecting cord that binds the soul to the place from which it was carved. Once cut, it can no longer draw spiritual sustenance, and this state is spiritual death, may Merciful Heaven save us. Conversely, regarding the righteous, the verse in Deuteronomy 4:4 states, But you who cling to Hashem your God are alive today. This is the meaning of, Yaakov is the lot of His inheritance, representing this unbroken spiritual cord. Understand this well.

וְעַל נֶפֶשׁ הָרָשָׁע אָמַר הַכָּתוּב (במדבר טו:לא): "הַכֶּרֶת תִּכְרֹת" וגו' – פָּרוּשׁ שְׂאוֹתוֹ הַשָּׂרֵשׁ הַדְּבִיק מֵהַנֶּפֶשׁ לַמָּקוֹם שֶׁמִּמֶּנּוּ חוֹצְצָה יִכְרִיתֶנּוּ ה', וְשׁוֹב אֵין לָהּ בְּנִיקָה, וְזוֹ הִיא מִיתָה רַחֲמָנָא לִיזְלָן. וּבַצִּדִּיקִים נֶאֱמַר (דברים ד:ד): "וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבִיקִים בְּה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חַיִּים" וגו', וְהוּא אָמַר "חֶבֶל נִחַלְתּוּ", וְהִבֵּן:

Original Ohr HaChaim Hebrew on Sefaria

AI-assisted study aids · Deuteronomy 32:8

בפשוט · In plain words

The Ohr HaChaim explains the nations' division through heavenly ministers, in contrast with Hashem's direct rule over Yisrael. He describes seventy branches of holiness, rooted in Yaakov, corresponding to seventy nations and governing their opposing forces. He then offers another reading based on different spiritual sources of souls. The word chevel, a cord, expresses the soul's continuing dependence on its source for life; being cut off severs that connection, while cleaving to Hashem sustains it.

למעשה · Lemaaseh

The image of the cord asks us to value the connection that sustains spiritual life. In one choice today, take the mitzvah seriously as part of cleaving to Hashem. The reflection follows the Ohr HaChaim's contrast between maintaining that connection and becoming cut off from it.

פסוק ט

Deuteronomy 32:9

כִּי חֵלֶק יְהוָה עַמּוֹ יִעֲקֹב תְּכַל נַחֲלָתוֹ:

For the portion of the LORD is His people, Jacob the lot of His inheritance.

No Ohr HaChaim comment on this pasuk in this edition.

ימצאֵהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִדְבָּר וּבְתֵהוּ יִלְל יִשְׁמֹן יִסְבְּכֶנָּהוּ יְבוֹנֶנָּהוּ יִצְרֶנָּהוּ כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינָיו:

He found him in a desert land, and in the waste, a howling wilderness; He compassed him about, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.

אור החיים הקדוש

AI-assisted explanatory translation

Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 32:10:1

He found him in a desert land, and in the waste, etc. It appears that the verse intends to follow the path of Chazal in Berachot 9b, who said that Israel did not leave Egypt until they had made it like a deep sea that has no fish in it, meaning they emptied it of all its spiritual sparks. Furthermore, they said in Likkutei Torah on Vayeira that if Israel had delayed any longer in Egypt, they would have been absorbed there forever, because they would have entered the fiftieth gate of impurity.

To describe this, the verse says, 'He found him in a land of desert', meaning a land that is desolate and has no spiritual substance left in it. For this reason, the text does not say 'He found him in the desert' (which would refer to the physical wilderness), but rather 'in a land of desert' (referring to Egypt which had become spiritually desolate). Understand this.

ימצאֵהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ מִדְבָּר וּבְתֵהוּ וְגו'. נראה כי יכוון הכתוב על דרך אֶמְרָם וְכֹרֶנָם לְבָרְכָה (ברכות ט:): לֹא יֵצְאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם עַד שֶׁשָּׂאוֹהָ כְּמִצּוּלָה שְׂאִין בָּהּ דָּגִים וְכו', וְאָמְרוּ עוֹד (ליקוטי תורה וירא) שְׂאֵם הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתְעַכְבִּין בְּמִצְרַיִם הָיוּ נִטְמָעִים שָׁם לְעַד לְעוֹלָם כִּי הָיוּ נִכְנָסִים בְּחִמְשֵׁי שְׁעָרֵי טְמָאָה,

לִזֶּה אָמַר יִמְצָאֵהוּ בְּאֶרֶץ שְׁהִיא מִדְבָּר, פְּרוֹשׁ חֲרָבָה וְאִין בָּהּ מִמֶּשׁ, וְלִזֶּה לֹא אָמַר יִמְצָאֵהוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר אֲלָא בְּאֶרֶץ מִדְבָּר, וְהִבּוּ:

The verse further explains that not only was the land a desert, completely devoid of any spark of holiness, but it was also 'a waste, a howling wilderness.' This means it was filled with filth and spiritual impurity. You will find that they said in the Zohar, Volume I, page 16a, that 'waste' (tohu) represents a specific force of impurity (kelipah), and similarly 'a howling wilderness' represents the forces of evil. Thus, the place was entirely stripped of good and completely filled with evil.

Because of this danger, Hashem 'compassed him about' (yesovevenhu), a term denoting protection. The Torah uses the future tense here to teach that this protection which He provided for them was not a temporary event; rather, it remains constant and will endure forever. The depth of this protection is that He extracted them from that place of evil so they would not be absorbed there.

Furthermore, in that very place, when Hashem brought the plagues upon Egypt, He protected them, just as the verses state: 'but of the livestock of the children of Israel...' (Exodus 9:6), 'in the land of Goshen...' (Exodus 9:26), 'but for all the children of Israel there was light...' (Exodus 10:23), and 'He will not allow the destroyer...' (Exodus 12:23). This is the meaning of 'He compassed him about.'

וְאָמַר עוֹד, שֶׁמֶלֶכַד שֶׁהָאָרֶץ מִדְבָּר מְבֹלֵי
נִצְוִץ קֹדֶשׁ, אֲלֵא שֶׁהוּא תְהוֹ יִלְל יְשִׁימוֹן,
פְּרוֹשׁ מִלְּאֵה טְנוּפֹת וְטִמְאָה. וְתִמְצָא
שֶׁאָמְרוּ בְּזֶהֶר (חֶלֶק א טז) כִּי תְהוֹ הוּא
בְּחִינַת קִלְפָּה אַחַת, וְכִמוֹ כֵּן יִלְל יְשִׁימוֹן
שֶׁהֵם בְּחִינַת הָרַע, שֶׁהַמָּקוֹם מְשַׁלֵּל מִהַטּוֹב
וּמִכָּל מַהֲרַע.

וְלִזֶּה ה' סָבַב, פְּרוֹשׁ, לְשׁוֹן שְׁמִירָה, וְאָמַר
לְשׁוֹן עֲתִיד לומר שְׁאוֹתָהּ שְׁמִירָה שֶׁעָשָׂה
לוֹ לֹא נִעְדְּרָה וְעוֹדֶנָּה תִּהְיֶה תָמִיד. וְהַכּוֹנֵה
בָּזֶה שֶׁהוּא צִיָּאִם מִמָּקוֹם הָרַע הֵהוּא שְׁלֵא
נִטְמָעוּ שָׁם,

עוֹד שֶׁבָּאוֹתוֹ מָקוֹם עֲצָמוֹ כְּשֶׁהָיָה מְבִיא ה'
הַמַּכּוֹת עַל מִצְרַיִם הָיָה שׁוֹמֵר אוֹתָם, עַל
דֶּרֶךְ אֲמָרוֹ (שְׁמוֹת ט:ו) "וּמִמֶּקְנֶה יִשְׂרָאֵל"
וְגו', "בְּאֶרֶץ גִּזְשׁוֹ" וְגו' (שְׁמוֹת ט:כו),
"וּלְכָל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה אוֹר" וְגו' (שְׁמוֹת
י:כג), "וְלֹא יִתֵּן הַמַּשְׁחִית" וְגו' (שְׁמוֹת
יב:כג), וְהוּא אָמַר "סוֹבְבֶנָּהוּ".

Yevonenehu, "He gave him understanding," refers to Hashem's gift of Torah, the source of understanding. Through it He guards Yisrael "like the pupil of His eye," as in "Understanding will guard you" (Mishlei 2:11). The eye image also appears in Zechariah 2:12: "Whoever touches you touches the pupil of His eye."

וְאָמְרוּ יְבוֹנְנֶהוּ – פְּרוֹשׁ, עַל יַד שְׁנֵיתָן לָהֶם
תּוֹרָה שֶׁהִיא מְקוֹר הַבִּינָה, שֶׁכֵּזֶה "צִרְנֶהוּ
כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינֹו", עַל דֶּרֶךְ אֲמָרוֹ (מִשְׁלֵי ב:יא)
"תְּבוֹנָה תִּנְצֹרֶכָה". וְאָמְרוּ "כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינֹו" –
כְּמֹאֲמַר הַנְּבִיא (זְכַרְיָה ב:יב) "כִּי הַנוֹגֵעַ
בְּכֶם כְּנוֹגֵעַ בְּכַבֵּת עֵינֹו".

The Ohr HaChaim explains the image through the eye's delicacy. It cannot bear a finger touching it because the finger is coarse compared with the eye, which is refined. He uses this contrast to express how something spiritual cannot bear contact with what is coarse and physical.

He connects this to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's statement in the Zohar (volume 2, 211b): "Woe to the soul that bears a foreign fire." The fire in which the soul is punished is foreign to the soul's own fire. By contrast, the righteous soul immerses in the fire called Nehar Dinur while that fire has not become distant or material, and therefore does not suffer from it. For clarity, he is distinguishing a fire alien to the soul's refined nature from a spiritual fire compatible with it. That distinction helps explain why contact with coarseness can be painful to what is spiritually refined.

Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 32:10:4

This is what the verse means here by 'as the apple of His eye.' Because Israel became spiritual beings, everything outside of them is considered coarse and physical. Therefore, even the touch of something spiritually coarse harms and damages them, just as the touch of a hand harms the delicate apple of the eye.

This high spiritual status was achieved only after He gave them the inheritance of the Torah. For this reason, the verse first says 'He cared for him' (yevonenehu, instructing him in Torah) and only afterward says 'He kept him as the apple of His eye.' This concept also explains the underlying reason for the negative commandments, which protect this delicate spiritual state. Understand this.

והכֹּנֶה בָּהּ, כְּדֶרֶךְ שְׂאִין הָעֵין סוֹכֶלֶת
נְגִיעַת אֶצְבַּע הָאָדָם בָּהּ, וְהַטָּעַם לְצַד כִּי גוֹף
הָאֶצְבַּע עָכוּר וְהָעֵין זָכָה, וְאִין הָרוֹחֵנִי סוֹכֵל
הַגָּשְׁמִי.

וְהוּא סוֹד מֵאֲמַר הַרְשָׁבִי" (זוהר ח"ב ר"א):
שְׂאֵמֶר: וְיָ לֵה לְנִשְׁמָתָא דְסִבְלָא אֶשָּׁא
נוֹכְרָאָה, פְּרוּשׁ, הָאֵשׁ שְׁבוּ נִכְנָסָת
לְהַעֲנִישָׁה הִיא אֵשׁ נִכְרִיָּה בְּעֶרְךָ אֵשׁ
הַנִּשְׁמָה, וְלִזְה תִּמְצָא שָׁם שְׁנֶפֶשׁ הַצַּדִּיק
תִּטְבֹּל בָּאֵשׁ הַנִּכְרָא נְהַר דִּינֹור, פְּרוּשׁ,
בְּעוֹד שֶׁלֹא נִתְרַחַק הָאֵשׁ וְלֹא נִגָּשׁ, שְׁבִיָּה
לֹא יִצְטָעֲרוּ. וְהֵבֵן סוֹדוֹן שֶׁל דְּבָרִים:

וְהוּא אָמְרוּ כָּאֵן "כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינוֹ", כִּי הֵם
רוֹחֵנִים וְכָל חוּץ מֵהֶם גָּשְׁמִי, וְלִזְה יִרְעוּ
וְיִשְׁחִיתוּ בָּהֶם אֶפְלוּ נְגִיעַת הָעָכוּר, כְּמוֹ
שֶׁיִּרְעַ נְגִיעַת יָד בְּאִישׁוֹן עֵין. וְזֶה

הָיָה אַחֵר שֶׁהִנְחִילָם הַתּוֹרָה, וְלִזְה קִדְּם
לִזְמַר "יְבוֹנְנֵהוּ" וְאַחֵר כֵּן אָמַר "יִצְרָנְהוּ"
כְּאִישׁוֹן עֵינוֹ", וְהוּא טָעַם מִצְוֹת לֹא
תַעֲשֶׂה, וְהֵבֵן:

Alternatively, the words 'He cared for him, He kept him' (yevonenehu yitzrenhu) can be understood in light of what Chazal said in Tractate Berachot 54b: Three categories of people require special protection, and one of them is a Torah scholar (talmid chacham). The reason for this is that the damaging spiritual forces are envious of the high stature of a Torah scholar and provoke him.

To address this, the verse says 'yevonenehu', meaning He gives him the Torah, which is called understanding (tevunah) in Proverbs 2:11. Because He has elevated him to this level, He must then take responsibility to guard him, as it says, 'He kept him' (yitzrenhu), protecting him from those envious forces.

עוֹד יִרְצֶה אָמְרוּ "בּוֹנֵהוּ יִצְרֵנְהוּ" עַל דֶּרֶךְ
אֲמָרָם זְכוּרָנָם לְבִרְכָּה בְּמִסְכָּת בְּרָכוֹת נד.;
שְׁלֹשָׁה צְרִיכִין שְׁמִירָה, וְאַחַד מֵהֶם הוּא
תַּלְמִיד חָכָם, וְהַטַּעַם לְפִי שְׁהַמְדִּיקִין
מִתְקַנְאִים מִמַּעַלְת בֶּן תּוֹרָה וּמִתְגָּרִים בּוֹ.

לָזֶה אָמַר "בּוֹנֵהוּ", פִּרוּשׁ יִתֵּן לוֹ הַתּוֹרָה
שֶׁנִּקְרָאת תְּבוּנָה (מִשְׁלִי ב:יא), לָזֶה חָל
עָלָיו לְשָׁמְרוֹ כְּאָמְרוּ "יִצְרֵנְהוּ" וְגו':

Original Ohr HaChaim Hebrew on Sefaria

AI-assisted study aids · Deuteronomy 32:10

בְּפִשְׁטוּת · In plain words

The Ohr HaChaim explains that Hashem found Israel in Egypt when it was spiritually desolate and filled with impurity. He protected them from being absorbed by the impurity and shielded them during the plagues. By giving them the Torah, He elevated them to a refined spiritual state, making them as sensitive to spiritual harm as the delicate apple of an eye is to physical touch. This high spiritual status requires the ongoing protection of the commandments and special divine guardianship.

לְמַעֲשֶׂה · Lemaaseh

The Ohr HaChaim connects the prohibitions of the Torah with guarding the spiritual sensitivity that Torah gives us. When a prohibition feels like a restriction, consider what it protects. Let that perspective help us take care with a particular boundary in our own avodas Hashem.

כַּנָּשָׁר יַעִיר קִנּוּ עַל-גּוֹזְלָיו יִרְחַף יִפְרֹשׁ כַּנָּפָיו יִקְחֵהוּ יִשְׁאַהוּ עַל- אַבְרָתּוֹ:

As an eagle that stirreth up her nest, Hovereth over her young, Spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, Beareth them on her pinions,

אור החיים הקדוש

AI-assisted explanatory translation

Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 32:11:1

"Like an eagle that awakens its nest." The Ohr HaChaim notes Chazal's explanations in the Sifrei, as cited by Rashi, then offers another reading. Vayikra Rabbah 17:4 teaches that when Yisrael violates Hashem's will, judgment does not strike at their lives first. It begins by awakening a person through afflictions of the house, then of the clothing, before going further.

That is how he reads the eagle awakening its nest: Hashem awakens His children. The awakening is also measured to what they can bear. He cites Bereishis Rabbah 55:2, that Hashem tests a person only according to the measure he is capable of bearing.

כַּנָּשָׁר יַעִיר קִנּוּ. רַ"ל (ספרי) דָּרָשׁוּ מֵהַ
שֶׁדָּרָשׁוּ בּוֹ, (עֵינַי רַשִׁי"ל) וְחוּץ מִדְּבָרֵיהֶם
יִתְבָּאֵר עַל דֶּרֶךְ אֲמָרָם וְ"ל (ויקרא רבה
יז:ד) כִּי כָשִׁי שִׁרְיָאֵל עוֹבְרִים רְצוֹנוֹ אֵין בַּעַל
הַדִּין נוֹגֵעַ בְּנַפְשׁוֹת תַּחֲלָה אֶלָּא מִתְחִיל
לְהַעִירוֹ בְּנִגְעֵי בָתִּים אַחֵר כֹּךְ בְּנִגְעֵי בְּגָדִים
וְכוּ';

וְהוּא מֵאֲמַר "כַּנָּשָׁר יַעִיר קִנּוּ" כִּמּוֹ כֵּן ה' י
מְעוֹרֵר בְּנָיו, גַּם מְעוֹרֵרָם כִּפִּי הִיכָלָת
שְׁיוּכָלוֹ עֲמוּד בּוֹ, כְּאֲמָרָם וְ"ל (בראשית
רבה נח:ב) שֶׁאֵין ה' מְנַסֶּה הָאָדָם אֶלָּא
בְּשִׁעוֹר שְׁיוּכָל לְסָבוּל.

And the verse's statement, He spreads His wings, is understood in light of the Sages' teaching in the Sifrei on Devarim 3:29 that Hashem's right hand is constantly stretched out to receive those who return. If, through the awakening that Hashem stirs up within Israel, they are moved to return in repentance, His right hand is immediately stretched out to welcome them. The Torah uses the future tense to convey this sequence: the very reason He spreads His wings from the outset is in order to gather in the Jewish person who returns in repentance. Were it not for this goal of receiving the penitent, He would not have spread His wings at all.

וְאָמְרוּ "פֶּרֶשׁ כַּנְפָיו" וְגו', עַל דֶּרֶךְ אֲמָרָם
(ספרי דברים ג, כט) יָמִינוּ פְּשׁוּטָה לְקַבֵּל
שָׁבִים, שָׁאֵם עַל יַד הָעֶרְהָ שְׁיַעִיר ה'
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִתְעוֹרְרוּ לָשׁוּב בְּתִשְׁבּוּבָה, תִּכְרַךְ
יָמִינוּ פְּשׁוּטָה. וְאָמַר "פֶּרֶשׁ" לְעֵתִיד, זֶה
שְׁיַעֲוֶה, טַעַם שְׁיַפְרֹשׁ כַּנְפָיו מֵעִיקְרָא הוּא
בְּשִׁבְלִי שְׁיִקְחֵהוּ לְאִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַחוּזֵר
בְּתִשְׁבּוּבָה, שְׁוִילֵת זֶה לֹא הִזָּה פֹרֵשׁ כַּנְפָיו.

And the verse's statement, He carries him on His wing, can be understood based on the Sages' teaching in Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 70, page 131a, on the verse in Kohelet 10:20, The winged one will tell the matter. They explain that there is a specific class of angels called possessors of wings. Their sacred service is to carry aloft on their wings every good word and blessing of Hashem that comes out of the mouth of a Jewish person. This is the meaning of, He carries him on His wing, meaning that He carries upward the spiritual goodness that comes from the person.

יִשְׂאֵהוּ עַל אֲבִרְתּוֹ – וְאָמְרוּ "יִשְׂאֵהוּ" וְגו',
עַל דֶּרֶךְ אֲמָרָם וְכַרְוָנָם לְבִרְכָּה (תיקוני
זוהר תיקון ע קלא). בְּפִסּוּק (קהלת י:כ)
"וּבַעַל כַּנָּפִים יִגִּיד דְּבָרִי", כִּי יֵשׁ כֶּת אַחַת
שֶׁל מַלְאָכִים שְׁנִקְרָאִים בְּעָלֵי כַנָּפִים,
וְשֵׁרוֹתָם הִיא שְׁכָל דְּבוּר טוֹב וּבִרְכַּת ה'
הַיּוֹצֵאת מִפִּי אִישׁ יְהוּדִי יִשְׂאֵהוּ כַנְפֵיהֶם,
וְהוּא אָמְרוּ "יִשְׂאֵהוּ עַל אֲבִרְתּוֹ", פֶּרוֹשׁ
יִשָּׂא הַבָּא מִמֶּנּוּ מֵהַטּוֹב.

בְּפִשְׁטוּת · In plain words

The Ohr HaChaim reads the eagle's awakening of its nest as Hashem's measured call to teshuvah. Judgment begins with a person's surroundings, and the test is within his capacity. The spreading wings express Hashem's readiness to receive one who returns. The final image, carrying on a wing, refers to angels who carry upward a Jew's good words and blessings of Hashem.

למעשה · Lemaaseh

Respond to an opportunity for teshuvah with the knowledge that Hashem is ready to receive you. The Ohr HaChaim explains that His outstretched hand is there to welcome the person who returns. Choose one thing to correct, and begin the return rather than letting discouragement delay it.

פסוק יב

Deuteronomy 32:12

יְהוָה בָּדַד יְנַחֵנוּ וְאֵין עִמּוֹ אֵל נֹכַר:

The LORD alone did lead him, And there was no strange god with Him.

אור החיים הקדוש

AI-assisted explanatory translation

Or HaChaim on Deuteronomy 32:12:1

"Hashem alone will lead him." The Ohr HaChaim explains this through Midrash Tanchuma, Tzav 7, on Hoshea 4:17: "Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone." Chazal read this as a teaching about unity. When Yisrael is united, even the presence of idolatry does not bring immediate punishment. Hanach lo, "leave him alone," expresses granting rest or relief, like the relief granted to the provinces in Esther. He therefore reads badad as the people being one unit: when they are united, Hashem leads them.

Source note: the Hebrew edition prints Esther 2:11 beside "he granted relief to the provinces." The quoted words are in Esther 2:18. The Hebrew is reproduced unchanged.

ה' בָּדַד יְנַחֵנוּ. יִתְפָּאֵר עַל דֶּרֶךְ אֲמָרָם
זְכוֹנָם לְבָרְכָה (תנחומא, צו ז) בַּפֶּסוּק
(הושע ד:יז) "חֲבוּר עֲצָבִים אֶפְרַיִם הֵנִיחַ לוֹ",
כְּשִׁישְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בֵּינֵיהֶם אַחָדוּת אֲפִלּוּ עוֹבְדֵי
עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה הֵנִיחַ לוֹ, פֶּרוּשׁ עַל דֶּרֶךְ (אסתר
ב:יא) "וַהֲנַחָה לַמְּדִינּוֹת עָשָׂה", וְהוּא אָמַר
"ה' בָּדַד" פֶּרוּשׁ כְּשֶׁהָעָם בָּדַד לְשׁוֹן בַּד – ה'
יְנַחֵנוּ.

He continues this reading with "and there is no foreign god with him." Although idolatry is present, Hashem does not count that sin against them by punishing them in this situation. The Ohr HaChaim compares the negative wording with Chazal's reading in Sukkah 41a of "No one seeks her" (Yirmiyahu 30:17). His text summarizes that inference as "this implies that she has [one who seeks her]." He uses the comparison here to read "there is none with him" as implying that a foreign god is in fact present, but Hashem is not punishing the people for it.

For clarity, the Gemara itself phrases its inference as "she requires seeking." The Ohr HaChaim's point here is that the negative wording carries an implication beyond its surface meaning; he is explaining the withholding of punishment, not permitting idolatry.

וְאֵין עִמּוֹ אֵל נֹכַר – פְּרוּשׁ, הַגִּם שֶׁהֵם עוֹבְדֵי
עֲבוֹדָה זָרָה אֵין ה' מְחַשֵּׁב לוֹ עוֹן זֶה.
וּמֵאֲמַר "אֵין עִמּוֹ" תִּתְּפָרֵשׁ עַל דֶּרֶךְ
שֶׁדָּרְשׁוּ זְכוּרֵנָם לְבָרָכָה (סוּכָה מֵא).
בְּפֶסוּק (יִרְמְיָה ל:יז) "דּוֹרֵשׁ אֵין לָהּ",
מִכָּלֵל שֶׁיֵּשׁ לָהּ, כְּמוֹ כֵּן בְּמָה שֶׁלְּפָנֵינוּ
אָמַר "אֵין עִמּוֹ" מִכָּלֵל שֶׁיֵּשׁ עִמּוֹ, אֶלָּא
שֶׁאֵין ה' מִסְּרוֹ עַל זֶה.

He then offers a different explanation. When will "Hashem alone lead him"? When the element of evil has come to an end within Yisrael. On this reading, "there is no foreign god with him" means that the evil attached to a person through Adam's sin has been removed. For clarity, this follows the earlier discussion of evil becoming mixed with good through Adam HaRishon's sin. The two readings are distinct: the first discusses unity despite sin, while this one describes guidance after that evil is gone.

עוֹד יִרְצֶה עַל זֶה הַדֶּרֶךְ: אֵימְתִי "ה' בִּדְדִּי
יִנְחֵנוּ"? כְּשֶׁנִּגְמַר חֶלֶק הָרַע מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, וְהוּא
אָמַר "וְאֵין עִמּוֹ אֵל נֹכַר", שֶׁהוּא חֶלֶק
הָרַע הַדְּבִיק בְּאָדָם מִחֲטֵא הָאָדָם, וְהַמְשָׁכִיל
דְּבִי:

בפשוט · In plain words

The Ohr HaChaim offers two readings. The first emphasizes the protective force of unity: Hashem withholds punishment even while serious sin is present. The second describes a different condition, in which the evil that entered through Adam's sin has been removed and Hashem alone leads Yisrael.

למעשה · Lemaaseh

Make one effort toward peace with another Jew, such as speaking respectfully where a disagreement has become tense. The Ohr HaChaim draws attention to the value of unity even when people are far from perfect. We can work on that unity while still taking our own teshuvah seriously.

Torah Hebrew comes from Sefaria, Tanach with Ta'amei Hamikra. The Torah English is JPS 1917. Ohr HaChaim Hebrew comes from Sefaria, Vocalized Edition. These source editions are public domain. Hebrew wording and punctuation are preserved; web markup is removed and spacing is normalized.

The Ohr HaChaim English is an AI-assisted explanatory translation from the Hebrew. Summaries and practical reflections are editorial study aids. Published Eliyahu Munk English is retained in the source archive, separate from this edition.