

Sfas Emes on Noach, in simple English. Studied on Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, 5787 (October 11, 2026). Each segment has a plain translation ("What it says") and an explanation ("What it means").

Part 2: Dor Haflagah, Unity Given to Israel

The main idea: God did not weaken the power of unity. He moved it from the builders of Bavel to Israel. Unity returns to the world every Rosh Hashanah. The Yamim Nora'im and Sukkos are the way to take it. On Shemini Atzeres, it becomes ours.

Segment 1: Unity was moved, not destroyed

WHAT IT SAYS

Why did God take away unity from the people of the Dispersion (Dor Haflagah)? God had said they were one people, and that nothing they planned would be withheld from them. Is anything too wonderful for God? God did not want to weaken the power of unity, because Israel needs it. So unity was taken from them and given to us.

WHAT IT MEANS

- God said, "Nothing they plan will be withheld from them." Then God stopped the tower. God could have stopped it in other ways and left them united. So why take away the unity itself?
- Unity is a holy power. God wanted to keep it whole. The way to do that was to take it from people who misused it and give it to Klal Yisrael (the Jewish people).
- The Dispersion was not only a punishment. The power of unity went back to its proper owner.

Segment 2: Unity returns every Rosh Hashanah

WHAT IT SAYS

At the start of creation, the power of unity was in the world. In the same way, at the start of each year, when God renews life for the whole year, this unity is in the world again.

WHAT IT MEANS

- This is the same idea as the first teaching. What was true at the start of the world is true at the start of the year.
- Rosh Hashanah is a kind of re-creation. The first oneness comes back, and we can take it.

Segment 3: The Yamim Nora'im and Sukkos are practical steps

WHAT IT SAYS

The Days of Awe and the festival of Sukkos are *eitzos*, which means advice or steps. They show how to take unity for Israel alone. On these days of judgment, Israel want to accept God as King. As the Gemara says: "Say *Malchiyos* before Me." When Israel accept life, they accept it only to bind themselves to God. The nations do the opposite. They do everything for themselves.

WHAT IT MEANS

- **Why people want life.** Israel want life so they can serve God. The nations want life for themselves.
- **Two kinds of unity.** The builders of Bavel said, "Let us make a name for ourselves." Their unity served themselves. Each person still pointed at himself. (The Sfas Emes does not quote this verse here. The link is the narrator's reading.) Israel accept one King, and that shared purpose makes them one.
- *Example:* A crowd pushing through one door is together only until the door opens. A choir is one because everyone sings the same song. The builders of Bavel were the crowd. Klal Yisrael on Rosh Hashanah is the choir.
- The Sfas Emes calls these days practical steps, not only holy days. Each part of the season is a way to take a power that is already in the world.

Segment 4: Atzeres is when unity is received

WHAT IT SAYS

The days from Rosh Hashanah to Atzeres are one period. In it, "Atzeres shall be for you." That means the unity described above.

WHAT IT MEANS

- The period starts with *Malchiyos* on Rosh Hashanah. It ends with "On the eighth day, Atzeres shall be for you" (Bamidbar 29:35). The Sfas Emes names only the two ends. The steps in between are the narrator's reading.

- "For you" means for Israel alone. The unity that was in the whole world at the start of the year is now gathered by Israel. *Atzeres* means a gathering.

THE MAIN LESSON

Unity is not the problem. Unity for oneself is the problem. The same power that built a tower for "a name for ourselves" can build Klal Yisrael when it is aimed at one King. That is why it could be given to Israel.

Questions to think about:

1. When you asked for life this Rosh Hashanah, what did you ask it for?
2. Where are you united with others only because each of you wants the same thing for yourself?
3. Now that *Atzeres* has passed, how can you keep its unity through Cheshvan, a month with no festival?