

Candle Lighting

7:26

S"Z Kriat Shema

10:10

Sunset

7:43

Motzei
Shabbat

8:19



Parshat HaShavuah

כי תצא

KI TEITZEI
י"ד אלול תשע"ה
AUGUST 29,
2015

A PUBLICATION OF



Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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PREPARING FOR TESHUVA
RABBI AVI HOCHMAN

Hurricane season can be very stressful (Especially for someone who has never experienced a hurricane!). The fear and utter panic that occurs when you hear that a hurricane might be coming is overwhelming. The most important thing people can do is adequately prepare for whatever may come their way.

In this week's פרשה the תורה tells us, "כי תבנה בית חדש ועשית מעקה לגגך..." (22:8). From the simple understanding of the פסוק, by building a fence you are preventing yourself from having a tragedy occur on your property. Why does the פסוק stress a בית חדש – a new house? Should it make a difference whether it's a new house or an old one?

The Slonimer Rebbe, in his sefer, נתיבות שלום, offers a deep insight into this פסוק. When a person is preparing to do תשובה and change their ways, sometimes it is not enough to just stop the negative action. He must also change the path he is on and start anew. In order for a person to make her "בית חדש" (her "newfound path") succeed, she must build herself a "fence". We need to create boundaries and find ways to make sure we do not get stuck in the same situations that have led us astray in the past.

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IT'S A WIN-WIN SITUATION

BAILEY FROHLICH ('16)

For the past two weeks, since Rosh Chodesh Elul, we have added לודוד ה' אורי on to the end of Shacharit and Maariv (Mincha for Sephardim). לודוד ה' אורי, which is a beautiful passage composed by Dovid HaMelech, contains the well-known song “אחת שאלתי”, in which Dovid calls out to Hashem, proclaiming, “שבתי בבית ה' כל ימי חיי” – “I want to dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of my life.” Dovid then adds, “לחזות בנעם ה' ולבקר בהיכלו” – “to enjoy the pleasantries of Hashem and to visit His temple”.

If the underlined words didn't give you the hint already, upon further examination, Dovid's word choice is quite interesting. Rabbi Norman Lamm asks, if Dovid beseeched Hashem to allow him to dwell in His house, why would he, in the very next clause, ask to visit this house? One doesn't visit the place in which he already dwells!

To understand the answer, we have to reflect on our lives and the way we each, as individuals, practice Judaism. If we are truly honest with ourselves, if we really examine our actions closely, we'll realize that our lives are often routine, from the moment we wake up and automatically say *Modeh Ani* to the moment we go to sleep and automatically say *Shema*. We daven every morning at the same time with the same words but without much thought. We learn from the same sefer every day during Chumash class but without much meaning. Unfortunately, the practice of our Jewish laws can become monotonous, robotic, dull. It's no wonder people look at Judaism as a checklist rather than a meaningful way of life.

This is exactly why Dovid HaMelech wished to be “לבקר”. Yes, he asked Hashem to be שבתי, to dwell and be accustomed to all the different laws and ways we can get closer to Hashem. But once he accomplished that, he wanted to לבקר, to renew his excitement and passion for doing these mitzvot. He wanted to revisit the mitzvot each time he did them in order to find something new to appreciate and concentrate on, a lesson that is especially apropos to Elul when we are constantly trying to find new ways to improve our relationships with Hashem.

It is no coincidence that Parshat Ki Teitzei is always read during Elul. Ki Teitzei contains more mitzvot than any other parsha, perhaps to show us that the way to get closer to Hashem is through mitzvot. People often forget this. It gets boring to go through the same routine mitzvot each day. So, as Dovid is trying to convey to us, the key to improving our *avodat Hashem* is to take an active role in our Judaism. We should try to take on a new mitzvah or to improve upon a mitzvah we already do. Let's start the new school year off with this mentality. This way, we'll do more mitzvot *and* be excited about it— it's a win-win situation.

LEARNING TO FORGIVE

TY KAY ('18)

Martin Luther King Jr. famously proclaimed, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” The concept is that if you try to fight fire with fire, it will only make the original fire bigger and more difficult to put out. However, if you use water, you can easily put out the fire.

Continued page 3





Kay continued

The Torah commands us on many occasions to not hate a fellow human being. In Parshat Ki Teitzei, Moshe commands the Jews saying, “Do not hate an Egyptian, *because you were a stranger in his land.*” (Devarim 23:8). Although not hating an Egyptian seems like a logical commandment, the reason seems convoluted. Why does Moshe say we were “strangers in their land,” making it seem like Bnei Yisrael did something wrong to the Egyptians? This seems especially backwards since the Egyptians invited us into Egypt, and then oppressed us by enslaving our people and killing our male firstborns.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks offers an explanation as to why Moshe gave the seemingly strange rationale behind the commandment to not hate an Egyptian. Rabbi Sacks reveals that Moshe was trying to ingrain within Bnei Yisrael a lesson that would last forever. Moshe was teaching us that we cannot hate the Egyptians simply because they hated us. If we return their hate, it will only cause a feud between our two people forever. Additionally, Moshe was stressing that while we were physically freed from Egypt, we would still be mentally constrained there if we continued to hate the Egyptians.

As the Jews are becoming a mighty nation, Moshe makes sure they have the capacity to fully break free from Egypt’s restraints. If the Jews continued to hate the Egyptians and never forgave them, we would never truly be a free people. Both Moshe and Martin Luther King Jr. understood that by not fighting hatred with more hatred, you are actually helping yourself.

COMPASSION IS KEY

LEOR LEVENSON (‘16)

This week’s parsha contains over 70 mitzvot, more than any other individual parsha. Many of these mitzvot deal with the laws of marriage. The Torah states: “an Ammonite or Moavite shall not enter the congregation of Hashem, even their tenth generation shall not enter the congregation of Hashem, to eternity” (Devarim 23:4), meaning that men from Ammon and Moav cannot ever convert and marry into our nation. This commandment seems overly harsh— Ammon and Moav refused to sell the Jews food and water, so now they cannot convert and marry into the Jewish people for eternity? Why would Hashem make this penalty so strict?

According to Chazal, the Jewish people have certain innate characteristics, including a merciful and charitable nature. Many other mitzvot in this parsha demonstrate the integral role that compassion plays in our religion: sending away the mother bird, returning lost objects, and putting up fences on the roof to protect people from danger. Ammon and Moav, however, demonstrated years ago that they are entirely devoid of compassion, as the Torah tells us: “...עַל דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא קָדְמוּ אֶתְכֶם בִּלְחֶם וּבַמַּיִם בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם” — “Because they did not greet you with bread and water on the way, when you left Egypt...” (Devarim 23:5). Therefore, they cannot possibly fit into the Jewish nation.

Compassion is central to this parsha and to our religion in general. As the new school year starts, we must create an environment of kindness and care for one another, an environment that embodies one of the core principles of our religion.



Rabbi Hochman continued

If a person is trying to start saying ברכות, he should try to carry around a סידור or a bencher when he eats. If a person is trying to limit the time she spends on the computer, she should set up a schedule to manage her time.

As we are currently in the month of אלול, and we are preparing to build our “בית חדש” for the new year, Hashem should help us all find the strength and determination to make our “fences” strong so that they last forever.

A SIMPLE ACT AND A HUGE REWARD...WHAT COULD BE BETTER? NETANYA MEYEROWITZ ('17)

74 mitzvot are commanded in Parshat Ki Teitzei, and although they are all important, one in particular is very striking. When the Torah describes the mitzvah of *shiluach haken*, sending away the mother bird before taking her eggs, it mentions the reward for doing the mitzvah—long life. This is unusual because the Torah does not normally mention the rewards for doing the various mitzvot.

Rashi explains that the reason the Torah includes the reward of long life is to emphasize that this is an easy mitzvah to accomplish; therefore, more demanding mitzvot may have an even better reward! The reward of long life is also mentioned regarding the mitzvah of honoring one's parents. What's the connection between the two mitzvot? Why are these the only two mitzvot whose rewards are mentioned, and why is the reward the same for both?

These two mitzvot both involve showing compassion to a parent. However, the goal of *shiluach haken*, the Ramban points out, is not simply to show compassion toward a mother bird. Rather, we show compassion to the mother bird in order to instill this trait in *our* everyday lives. Perhaps this is the connection to *kibud av v'em*. In both cases, the simple act of showing compassion—of being more compassionate people—earns us the reward of long life. Therefore, the Torah's intention for specifying the reward for *shiluach haken* and *kibud av v'em* is a lesson to all of us: a little compassion can go a long way!

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