



תורת חיים Torat Chayim

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בס"ד

Ki Tavo

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This issue of Torat Chayim is dedicated to the safety of the IDF.

Parshah: The Message of Our Stones

Parshat Ki Tavo (Devarim 27:2-8) teaches us about stones:

- 1) When we cross the Yarden and enter Eretz Yisrael, we should write the Torah on a set of large stones.
- 2) We should also build a mizbeiach of stones, and bring offerings before Hashem.
- 3) And when we finally entered Eretz Yisrael, we set up a monument of twelve **more** stones, parallel to the twelve tribes (Yehoshua 3-4).

What is the message of all of these stones?

For centuries, from the time that Yaakov, Rachel, Leah, Bilhah, and Zilpah left Canaan until their descendants returned, the land was under new mismanagement. The people who brought us the ugliness of Sdom, the misbegotten Amon and Moav, and the rape of Dinah had the full run of the land. With idolatry and brutality, they **ruined** it. "They made My land *tamei*!" Hashem exclaimed (Vayikra 18:24-25). The family of Avraham and Sarah had used stones for mitzvot – building altars and worshipping Hashem on them. But the Canaanites built Sdom and Shechem with stone. They constructed idolatrous altars and monuments of stone. They actually worshipped stone! The Israeli poet Yossi Gamzu wrote in a poem called *HaKotel*, "There are human beings with hearts of stone, and there are stones with the hearts of human beings." And those stones wept.

This may be the message of the stones in our parshah.

When we returned to the land, we purified and re-branded the stones, as literal pillars of our new land. We wrote the Torah on the stones. We built a mizbeiach for Hashem out of stone. And we set up twelve stones representing our community of twelve tribes, a nation responsible to each other. We used stones to restore Eretz Yisrael's original role and relationship with us.

This message remains relevant. Often, we establish our living spaces with the best and purest of intentions. Our homes will be loving and nurturing, bastions of Torah and mitzvot. Our workplaces will host honesty, integrity, and teamwork. Our shuls will be for communing with Hashem, reflecting on Torah and training the next generation of daveners. But we don't necessarily live up to those ideals, and the stones of our homes, our workplaces, our shuls, can even become unwilling allies in our mistakes. Parshat Ki Tavo reminds us that we can re-brand. Our homes, our businesses, our shuls, can again express our holy identities, and can again influence us in wonderful ways. We can set up new stones.

Every year, ahead of Rosh HaShanah, the Western Wall Heritage Foundation inspects all of the stones in the Kotel, to make sure that the space will be safe for everyone coming to daven. Let's do the same with our stones, and so let us enter our new year with joy and re-dedication.

Parshah Riddles for Kids (answers on the back)

Age 4-8: In Elul we blow shofar daily, and say a special perek of Tehillim, *L'David*. What is the perek number?

Age 8-12: When bringing Bikkurim we say Devarim 26:5-10. When else do we say Devarim 26:5-8?

Age 12+: We only say Devarim 26:5-10 with Bikkurim from Shavuot to Succot. Why? See Rashi to Devarim 26:11.

Journey Through Tanach: Shemuel I 15:13-21 - Shaul Thinks It's Ok

When we left off before the summer, Shaul had deviated from Hashem's instructions for the war with Amalek in two ways: 1) He did not kill the animals immediately, instead holding them for korbanot; 2) He did not kill the Amalekite King Agag immediately, instead parading him around the country.

The prophet Shemuel pursues Shaul, and finally catches up with him in Gilgal. Shaul greets him with an enthusiastic, "You are blessed to Hashem; I have upheld Hashem's command!" Shemuel responds by asking why the animals remain alive; Shaul, unashamed, reports that "the nation" spared the best animals to bring as korbanot to Hashem. (15:13-15)

If Shaul is aware that he is in trouble, he hides it very well. Shemuel rebukes him for failing to rein in the apparently disobedient nation, and accuses him of personally swoop-

ing down upon the spoils like a scavenging bird. But Shaul insists that he has done nothing wrong; the nation kept the animals for korbanot. And Shaul volunteers additional information: He has kept Agag alive, while destroying the rest of Amalek. Shaul does not seem to realize that keeping Agag alive is another point against him. (15:16-21)

Why does Shaul think sparing Agag is acceptable? Abarbanel suggests that Shaul is following a practice seen with other prisoner kings in Tanach, keeping them alive to demonstrate the victory and put their nation to shame. Shaul thought he was consistent with the command because he intended to kill Agag eventually. But he was tragically wrong, with the animals and with Agag; Hashem wanted both destroyed immediately to demonstrate that this was not a war for treasure or pride, but a war to eradicate evil.

The 613 Mitzvot: #142-143: Leftovers

Yes, that's right: There are mitzvot regarding leftovers! Specifically, Vayikra 7:11-21 instructs us that:

- 1) When we bring a *korban todah* (thanks offering) we are supposed to eat the meat, and not leave any over. This is the Torah's 142nd mitzvah.
- 2) Further, when we bring any korban we should burn any meat that is left over after the allotted time for its consumption. This is the 143rd mitzvah.

Among the ideals taught by this pair of mitzvot is the dignity of the Beit HaMikdash and its korbanot. If we were to keep the korban's substance on hand in a misguided attempt to honor it, the flesh would decay and become repellent, and people would associate the korban and the Beit HaMikdash with this repellent material. Therefore we are instructed not to leave any over, but instead to burn it.

Tanach Tour of Israel: Akko

The city of Akko sits on the Mediterranean Sea in north-western Israel; a mishnah identifies it as a border town regarding the laws of *gittin*. (Mishnah Gittin 1:2) Because Akko marks the boundary of Israel, a midrash states that the water of the *mabul* stopped there (Talmud Yerushalmi Shekalim 6:2).

Akko is mentioned explicitly only once in Tanach, in connection with the cities which were not conquered by the tribe of Asher (Shoftim 1:31). From that text it would seem to be part of the portion of Asher, and this is also indicated in Talmud Yerushalmi Succah 5:1, as part of a discussion of whether the prophet Yonah was from Asher or Zevulun. However, other sources identify Akko as part of Zevulun (Yalkut Shimoni Pinchas 773).

Akko has long been an important port, and Chazal describe many sages living or travelling there. For example, one gemara describes Rabbi Abba of Akko kissing its stones (Ketuvot 112a), a mishnah depicts Rabban Gamliel bathing in Roman baths there (Avodah Zarah 3:4), and a Tosefta portrays Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, Rabbi Yehudah and Rabbi Yosi sharing a meal there on a Friday afternoon (Berachot 5:2).

In post-talmudic times a significant Jewish population remained in the city throughout the many wars and changes of power in the land. The 12th century traveler Binyamin of

Tudela recorded, "One day's journey brings one to Acre, the Acco of old, which is on the borders of Asher; it is the commencement of the land of Israel. Situated by the Great Sea, it possesses a large harbour for all the pilgrims who come to Jerusalem by ship. A stream runs in front of it, called the brook of Kedumim. About 200 Jews live there, at their head being Rabbi Zadok, Rabbi Japheth, and Rabbi Jonah." (Adler translation)

Among the illustrious residents of the city were the Rambam (briefly), some of the authors of Tosafot, the Ramban, the Ohr haChaim haKadosh, and Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto. We are taught that Rabbi Luzzatto was buried in the city.

Under the British, Haifa became the central port; Akko became known as a British jail and gallows. In 1947, Jewish *machteret* fighters broke into the jail and released its prisoners. During the War of Independence the Jews conquered the city, and the Arab population fled. Today's population includes both Jews and Arabs; there have been occasional outbreaks of trouble, most recently on Yom Kippur 5769 (2008). On a more positive note, the Chinese embassy in Israel held a dragon boat festival in tandem with the Akko municipality this past June.

Upcoming Learning!

All classes are open to men and women and free of charge, unless otherwise noted

Rav Kook Shabbat, marking his 91st yahrtzeit

Friday night dvar torah: ***A Happy Viduy***

Derashah: ***Imber's HaTikvah or Rav Kook's HaEmunah?***

Seudah Shelisheet 7:25 PMr: ***Rav Kook's Guide for Today's Perplexed***

7:30-8:30 PM Mon Aug 31: **Women's Zoom Beit Midrash: Sefer Yehoshua**, with R' Torczyner, ZOOM ID 781 3810 0918

9:00-9:45 PM Tues Sep 1 for Men: **Gemara Megillah** with Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner at 745 Evergreen

7:45-8:15 PM Thu Sep 3: **Parshah Chabura** with Rabbi Peretz Hochbaum at ECDP

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Daily 10-15 min. of Shemuel <http://tiny.cc/washemuel> ∞ Tuesday 5-10 min. of Medical Halachah <http://tiny.cc/wamedical>

Age 4-8 Age 8-12 Age 12+
Perek 27 We say it in the Pesach Seder. We are supposed to bring Bikurim at a time of joy, and the harvest is the time when we are happy.

Answers to Parshah Riddles

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