

DIVREI TORAH FROM YESHIVOT AND SEMINARIES



Over the coming year Torah Tidbits is proud to highlight the many outstanding Rabbis and teachers that lead the various Yeshivot and Seminaries here in Israel.

MIDRESHET MORIAH, YERUSHALAYIM



Midreshet Moriah, a Religious-Zionist seminary located in the Baka neighborhood of Jerusalem, offers a warm, family-like environment. The program emphasizes the individual growth and growing independence of every student; maximum flexibility for each student in designing her personal schedule

to match her interests and goals; close relationships with teachers and mentors; the opportunity to create a passionate relationship with Torah through challenging, exciting shiurim and in private chavrutot with our faculty; and lasting ties to friends, teachers, and the Land of Israel.



Mrs. Bracha Krohn Menachelet

Parshat Ki-Teitzei contains 27 positive commandments and 47 prohibitions. Among those prohibitions we find “You shall not reject an Egyptian, for you were a sojourner in his land.” The grandchild of an Egyptian convert may marry a Jew. Sefer HaChinuch (mitzvah 679, in the context of a similar prohibition regarding Edomites) explains that we may not hate the Egyptians forever, even though they tortured and killed us, because that enslavement was a decree of G-d’s and we should not direct hatred towards them, as a response. They were just the messenger, sent by Divine Providence.

Some people might find difficulty with this answer in the Sefer HaChinuch, when considering Rambam’s explanation of free will in Chapter 6 of Hilchot Teshuva. After explaining the concept of free will, Rambam recounts many verses throughout Tanach that support his theory that people are not born righteous or wicked. In halacha 3, Rambam claims that Hashem’s hardening Pharaoh’s heart, understood by Sefer HaChinuch as Divine providence, was actually a punishment for deciding to enslave and torture the Jews. Once Pharaoh decided that he would not listen to Hashem’s demand to “let my people go”, then Hashem would not allow him to change his mind. The punishment was loss of free choice. According to

Rambam's theory here, we DO hold Egyptians responsible for their choices and therefore the mitzvah in this week's parsha "to let it go and let bygones be bygones" is more difficult to grasp. How can we just "move on" and welcome them with open arms, even after 3 generations have passed from a conversion?



I think that what we are seeing here is the Torah's insistence on cultivating gratitude, a reason which is often suggested for many mitzvot – Bikkurim, korban Todah, and kibbud horim, to name a few. Here, too, although we have so many reasons to turn our backs on the Egyptain nation forever, the Torah will not let us. We can do better than that, and are being commanded to do better than that. We owe them love, brotherhood and partnership "because we were sojourners in their land." At the end of the day, they hosted us, took us in, fed us in a famine and gave us great pasture lands in Goshen on which to live. We must

acknowledge the hospitality that they extended us in our time of need.

Chaza"l warn us of the danger in being ungrateful, in a midrash on a pasuk at the beginning of Sefer Shemot. We read in perek 1 Pasuk 8 that "A new king arose over Egypt who did not know of Yosef." Our sages (Shemot Rabbah 1:10) direct our attention to a few chapters later, when Pharaoh brazenly declares "I do not know Hashem, nor will I send out Israel." They connect the two verses with a warning: all who cannot be grateful to man will ultimately deny G-d! If one does not cultivate the middah of hakarat haTov, then ultimately it will interfere in one's relationship with haKadosh Baruch Hu. This Pharaoh who did not acknowledge and thank Yosef for his help in the years of famine would never acknowledge and respect Hashem.

Rav Hutner, in an essay on Chanukah, points out that the verb for "to thank" in Hebrew shares the same root as the word for "to admit." Both are expressed with the Hebrew word *l'hodot*. In what way are these two words related? Rav Hutner suggests that when we thank someone,

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we are, in essence, admitting we do not have self-sufficiency and complete independence. We could NOT have done it without them: “I admit that I could not have done as well on the test without your tutoring – thank you!” or “I admit that it would have been such a schlep to get to this wedding without your picking me up and taking me – thank you!”



When we welcome the Egyptian into our nation, through marriage with a third generation convert, it strengthens that muscle that can acknowledge the good that people have done for us. We can then use that middah in our relationship with Hashem, recognizing daily the gifts in our life that we receive. Each morning we begin our day with “modeh ani,” a short prayer thanking Hashem for returning our soul. What we are saying, as we recite that prayer, is also “we acknowledge, Hashem, that you have given us a soul, We would not be here again this morning were it not for Your kindness. Thank you for that gift! I could not be embarking upon a new day without You!”

In working on hakarat haTov between us and our neighbors and friends, may we strengthen and deepen our relationship with Hashem. In this merit, may we be zocheh to see geulah in our days. ■



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☎ 054-766-0338

✉ Yitzchak@yykrealstate.com

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