

DIVREI TORAH FROM YESHIVOT AND SEMINARIES



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

YESHIVAT REISHIT, BEIT SHEMESH



For over a quarter of a century, Yeshivat Reishit, located in the heart of modern Beit Shemesh, has been inspiring serious talmidei chutz laaretz to profound idealism and personal growth with wide-ranging, exciting Torah study.

Rabbi Aharon Marcus Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivat Reishit Yerushalayim

Covenant, Community, And Conscience

After Avraham has shed the vestiges of idolatry, separated from Lot, and routed four mighty kings, the Torah recounts that Hashem that ushers him into a history-altering covenant. It introduces the formation of what Rav Yoseph Dov Soloveitchik called the covenantal community, and includes promises of inheritors and of a homeland, but also of suffering and deliverance.

The fact that these final elements, which are the original source for the Egyptian exile and Exodus, are included in this crucial *brit*,

demonstrates their centrality to the building the national consciousness of Klal Yisrael.

Transience, Slavery, and Oppression

Rav Matisyahu Solomon identifies the elements of *gerut*, transience, *avdut*, slavery, and *inuy*, oppression, explicit in Hashem's promise, as containing the spiritual components indispensable for becoming *avdei Hashem*.

Gerut, the uncomfortable experience of strangers, who lack connection to both the people and culture of their current residence, is crucial for the service of Hashem. As much as engagement with community is vital to Jewish living, to develop a full relationship with Hashem necessitates some mea-



sure of detachment from entrenchment in the finitude of this world. Closeness to Hashem entails devotion to His mitzvot even when they may not be in style. It includes our taking a break from worldly involvements every seven days to recharge our spiritual batteries as well as pausing in the middle of a workday simply to speak to Hashem.

Further, a Jew needs to perceive himself as a foreigner amidst the lower, physically concentrated reaches of *olam hazeh*. Idealism rather than hedonism is the calling of a Jew, even if it's the exception in society rather than the rule. The *gerut* in Egypt was to instill in Avraham's descendants the feeling of being exceptional in this world. From *yetziat Mitzrayim* and on, being part of *Am Yisrael* means realizing that our true roots aren't in this world, but in *Olam Haba*.

Slavery, too, prepared us for the service of God. An eved Hashem must be intimately familiar with the experience of servitude, with total dependence, and with all-encompassing responsibility. Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook adds that only one who has accustomed himself to self-nullification can truly accept the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven.

Finally, while oppression, or suffering, is not something ordinarily associated with being a good Jew, in a conversation with a potential convert we must ask, "Why do you wish to convert? Are you not aware of how harassed, persecuted and tormented we are?" The Ramban explains that our bond with Hashem originates with His

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Tuesday, November 3 - Rabbi Breitowitz's shiur The dedication is in memory of our parents:

Tovah bat Nisan z"l (9 Tishrei),

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Marcheshvan), **Shmuel Yitzchak ben**

Yicheskai z"l (25 Marcheshvan), and **Rina bat**

Yehoshua Benyamin a"h (2 Shevat).

David and Sarah Maslow

love for us and only we, as a nation, are uniquely capable of receiving and accepting the full measure of His love. And sometimes, as they say, love hurts.

Jews through the ages have had their devotion put to the ultimate test again and again and have heroically passed. How have so many simple Jews chosen the sword over the cross? From where did they get their inner strength and heroism? In *Mitzrayim*, Hashem infused us, His beloved, with the extraordinary courage and resilience needed to withstand the intense jealousy of the nations for our special relationship.

Justice and Vast Property

The two aspects of the redemption mentioned to Avraham in this brit are also vital instructions for *Klal Yisrael's* service of Hashem.

First, Avraham is told explicitly that the tormentors of his descendants will be brought to justice and punished for their evil, which according to Rashi, refers to the Ten Plagues. Hashem treats the Jews to an unforgettable, awesome demonstration of power, providence, and punishment. Hashem's message is unambiguous: "I'm not hiding anything. There is ultimate

justice in My world, and this is what you should expect."

"The beginning of all wisdom," writes Shlomo, "is awe of Hashem," and the most basic level of this awe is simple, unsophisticated fear of Divine punishment. Though this dread is nowhere near the refined and lofty reverence of Hashem's majesty of a serious *oveid Hashem*, at the same time, it is indispensable to any real connection with the *Ribbono shel Olam*.

Second, Hashem promises Avraham that his children will depart slavery with fantastic wealth. Why? Two words: *kevod Shamayim*. When a pathetic, poverty-stricken individual accepts the sovereignty of Hashem, it makes much less of an impression than when a prominent, successful person devotes himself to His service. By granting *Bnei Yisrael* fabulous riches, Hashem is telling them, in effect, that their mission is to spread the glory of Heaven in this world. Affluence, He is teaching, is a wonderful, practical instrument in the hands of true *ovdei Hashem*.

May we learn the lessons and be worthy heirs to our father Avraham's epic covenant. ■

