



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



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Young, Wild & Free to Receive the Torah

Something that often gets overlooked, is the key role teenagers played in the receiving of the Torah, as is seen at the end of Parshat Mishpatim. After writing down and teaching the Torah to Bnei Yisrael, Moshe builds an altar at the bottom of Har Sinai. Who does he appoint to bring the korbanot?

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת נְעָרֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲלוּ עֹלֹת וַיִּזְבְּחוּ זִבְחִים שְׁלָמִים לַיהוָה פָּרִים

According to the plain meaning of this verse Moshe sent the youth to bring the korbanot. The obvious question is why them? Why not the kohanim, the elders, or the first-born?

I believe that this is in contrast to the beginning of the perek, in which the zekeinim (elders) weren't able to approach God together with Moshe.

וַיִּגַּשׁ מֹשֶׁה לְבָדּוֹ אֶל ה' וַיֹּהֵם לֹא יִגָּשׁוּ

Once one is an adult it is very difficult to change. People are invested and set in their ways and don't have the energy for extreme measures. The zekeinim were not to be the heroes of Matan Torah. Instead Moshe turned to the youth, to the teenagers, so full of wild energy and youthful eagerness. He called upon them to channel

that young spirit to properly celebrate the receiving of the Torah.

How fascinating that in the secular world responsibility starts at eighteen, once one is no longer a teenager. Not so in the Jewish world, where at twelve/thirteen we empower our teens to join and take an equal part of religious responsibility and opportunity, and their contributions to our communities cannot be understated.



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Get Back Up

Most Divrei Torah start with questions posed by Rabbis, but this one will actually feature a question from a heretic. While receiving the Torah, Bnei Yisrael said “naaseh v'nishma” - “we will do and listen”, implying that they agreed to keep the Torah before they heard the commandments.

The Gemara (Shabbat 88) tells us that a heretic posed a question to Rava. How can you agree to keep something before you know what it is? Maybe the mitzvot will be difficult and in some cases impossible to keep! It's irresponsible to commit to something that you don't know you can fulfill. Rava responded that we follow Hashem wholeheartedly. Rashi expands on this and explains that we trusted that God wouldn't command us to do something that we

couldn't follow.

This answer is very difficult, for there are times when it isn't easy to follow the Torah. We are human, and sometimes fail. How can we state with such confidence that we will keep the mitzvot? I think the deeper understanding of Rava's answer is not that we would always succeed, but rather that we will always try and we won't give up. Does God give us tests we can't pass? I don't know. But I do think we can always grow from our challenges, we can always get back up. And that is the true "passing" of the test. ■

NCSY Israel is the premier organization in Israel, dedicated to connect, inspire, empower teen olim to the Land of Israel by encouraging passionate Judaism through Torah and Tradition. Find out more at israel.ncsy.org



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