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ChashModi'in
Madrich

We Create Our Mindset

At the beginning of this week's parsha, Bney Yisroel are promised great blessings if we follow in the ways of HaShem. We are also warned of the great curses and suffering that will befall us if we do not. In telling us what we should do, the pasuk tells us of how we need to learn the Torah and perform its mitzvot (Rashi).

When the Torah warns us about what not to do, the pasuk uses a slightly different wording but still a parallel opposite of the first pasuk. "If you don't learn the Torah and don't follow its commandments..." The Torah then proceeds to add a few things that are not found in the 'what yes to do' section, the first of which being

"וְאִם-בְּחַקְתִּי תִמְאָסוּ and if you despise My statutes." Why is it that the Torah doesn't charge us with 'cherishing' His statutes the way we are warned from despising them?

I'd like to suggest an explanation based on the famous line, **כי אחרי הפעולות נמשכים**, הלבבות. When we act disdainfully towards

the Torah and its mitzvot, it's only natural that we will become our emotional perspective. On the other hand when it comes to the active performance of learning Torah and following the mitzvot, we are held responsible to invest and make a real effort, and be'ezrat HaShem be zoche to experience the **דרכיה דרך יענם וכל נתיבותיה שלום** of a life of avodat HaShem. Although, sometimes we won't, and it's in those times especially where we don't find any mention of or have any feeling of 'cherishing His statutes' that the Torah reminds of just how much bracha we are deserving of and just how valuable we, and all that we do, are to Hashem.

Shabbat Shalom!



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Bows and Rainbows

The annual Jewish festival of Lag B'Omer occurred this past Wednesday night, on the 18th of Iyar, and we celebrated by throwing parties and making bonfires. It is also common, especially among children, to play with bows and arrows on Lag B'Omer.

Why are bows and arrows, normally used as weapons, used to celebrate the life of the holy and humble Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, one of our greatest sages and top students of Rabbi Akiva?

According to our sages, one connection



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between Rashbi and the idea of bows and arrows is that no rainbows appeared during his lifetime. The Sages tell us that while rainbows are a very beautiful sight, they signify that G-d is unhappy with the world, and instead of sending punishment and destruction like He did through the mabul, He sends a rainbow as a sign to tell us to improve. A rainbow is therefore a symbol of Hashem's promise to Noach never to destroy our world again because of our sins. The merit of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, however, was so strong that it overpowered the sins of his generation, and that's why no rainbow was ever shown by G-d.

But what do rainbows have to do with bows and arrows? The Hebrew word for "rainbow" in Hebrew is keshet and, interestingly, the same word, keshet, is used for the bow used in archery. Therefore, when

we use bows and arrows, it is a way to commemorate Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's strong merit during his time.

Just as Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's humility and holiness merited his nation's salvation, we too can strive for greatness in our time. When using a bow and arrow, the closer in you pull the bow toward yourself, the further the distance the arrow will travel when released. As Jewish people, by focusing on our own actions each day, we make a huge impact on our nation as a whole, and with each mitzvah and act of kindness, our merits as a nation will only grow!! ■

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