



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



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Serving HaShem With a Full Heart

In this week's parsha, as the brothers are plotting to kill Yosef, Reuven convinces them to simply throw him into the pit so he can die that way instead. The pasuk continues to explain how his full intention was to come back later so that he could ultimately return Yosef to his father. The Midrash Rut Rabba comments on this pasuk as follows:

אָמַר רַבִּי יִצְחָק בַּר מִרְיֹן בָּא הַפְּתוּחַ לְלַמְּדֵךְ שָׂאֵם אָדָם עוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה יַעֲשֶׂנָה בְּלִבָּב שְׁלָם. שְׂאֵלו הָיָה רְאוּבֵן יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְקַטֵּיב עָלָיו... בְּכַתְּפוּ הָיָה מוֹלִיכוֹ אֶצְלֵי אָבִיו

If a person is going to perform a mitzva, he should perform it with a full heart, for had Reuven known that the Torah would write about his saving Yosef, he would have put him on his shoulders and carried him straight to his father.

A simple question begs explanation, if Reuven knew this was the right thing to do, why didn't he do it in the first place? I'd like to suggest the following. Even though

his brothers would eventually find out he was the one that saved Yosef, he wanted to save himself the discomfort of doing it while they were around and judging him.

So often we find ourselves in situations where we know the right thing to do, but it would be so much easier, socially, physically, emotionally, to not make those hard decisions and to just go with the flow as much as possible. One message we can take from this midrash is that in life's many difficulties we should constantly aim to figure out what would make HaShem proud of us and then try our best to do that with a 'full heart', without worrying about external pressures and only focusing on fulfilling *ratzon HaShem*.

Shabbat shalom!



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Be A Shepherd Not A Sheep

This week's parsha is Vayeshev, which begins in Canaan, talking about how Yosef was a shepherd. When looking back at our Jewish ancestors we can see that a vast amount of our ancestors were shepherds

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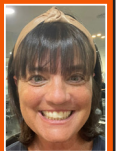
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as well. Such as Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe and even David Hamelech. The greatest of our early Jewish leaders chose this profession, despite it not being viewed highly by surrounding cultures.

A very simple question can be brought out from this, why did so many of our ancestors, original leaders of the Jewish people choose to be shepherds?

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook z'l, comments that the advantage of shepherding can be found in their secluded lifestyle. While engaged with flocks, ambling through the hills and valleys, the shepherd is cut off from the noisy distractions of society, thus enabling ample time for inner reflection.

Additionally, the labor is not intensive. Unlike farming, shepherding does not require one to exert a great deal of energy in mundane matters. Nevertheless, the shepherd is concerned with the actual physical needs of the flock. A shepherd does not live in an ivory tower, immersed in artificial philosophies detached from life; rather, the shepherd is constantly engaged with the real world, seeking water, shade, and good food for animals. The thoughts and wonders of the shepherd may be grand and, in the clouds, but they cannot take the shepherd away from the task at hand.

There is a saying that is often said "Be like a shepherd and not a sheep" shepherd referring to a leader and a sheep is one that follows along for he knows he is protected, likewise we should try and 'lead' and stand for what we believe in, follow our principle.

Our ancestors were shepherds, they were basic people and worked hard but there are important lessons that can be learned

from them. We as people can look at the shepherds as a goal, just like the shepherd has one task on hand (to protect the sheep) we should strive to be fully dedicated to our relationship with G-d, and serving our purpose in this world despite all the struggles and distractions it brings. May we be able to see through all the materialistic wonders of the world and not be strayed by the dangers on the path.

Though it is not so practical to be a shepherd nowadays, maybe we can still make time each day to contemplate and think about what's important in life.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

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