

Parshat Ki Tavo: Continuous Compassion

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

The *Torah* commands us that when we enter Israel, in the third year of *shemitta*, we must give an additional tenth of our produce to the Levite, the proselyte, the orphan and the widow. Then we are to make a declaration sounding much like a confession called *viduy massrot*: "I have removed the holy things from my house, I have given to the Levite... I have hearkened to Your voice. I have acted according to everything as You commanded me." If we've fulfilled a *mitzvah*, what is there to confess? Further, the term mentioned, "Gaze down from Your holy abode (*maon*)" generally refers to sins. This is the only time it's mentioned in connection to a *mitzvah*. The Gemara explains that performing *mitzvot*, especially *chesed*, has the power to transform a curse into a blessing.

The Shaarei Chaim notes that *maon* is the fifth of the seven heavens. It is that heaven where the angels sing to Hashem all night but, because Hashem wants to hear the voices of *Bnei Yisroel*, the angels are silent during the day. These are songs of joy, as alluded to at a wedding, "Let us bless our God *shehasimcha bim'onon* in Whose abode is this celebration..." This abode of joy is the seat of blessings. But while Hashem wants to give us blessings, we must activate the delivery system through our prayers, and the most auspicious times for prayers is after performing *mitzvot*.

Rabbi Wolbe focuses on the phrase "before Hashem." We realize we are standing before Him and desire a relationship with Him. Here we acknowledge that Hashem always sees

us, observing us from His holy abode. *Viduy/Confession* is rooted in the word *vadai/truth*, notes the *Chochmat Hamatzpun*. Can I in all honesty say that I have done everything Hashem has asked of me, with the proper focus and intention? *Mitzvah* observance should not be merely rote, but should be full of intention as a means of connecting to Hashem.

The Sforno maintains that this declaration is in fact a confession of the sin of the golden calf. After all, had we not sinned, the firstborns would have been entitled to these tithes. Instead, we must now give the *terumot* and *ma'asrot* to the Levites. With this declaration, we admit that the mini temples of our homes are no longer worthy of being the suppositories of the *terumot* and *ma'asrot*, and we must now give these gifts to those who serve in Hashem's temple, writes the *Asufat Ma'arachot*. That was the curse and the punishment. But by performing this *mitzvah* we transform the curse to a blessing. Like *Rosh Hashana*, it generates both trepidation and joy. While I tremble at my transgression, I am still filled with joy. Rabbi Pincus z"l explains that on *Rosh Hashana* Hashem sits in judgment over us. But He also has the power to pardon us. We are His loyal subjects who want to serve Him. The fear and the joy are thus complementary. The very sounds of the *shofar* carry within them the majesty of *teruah* and the brokenness of *shevarim*. Our prayers on *Rosh Hashana* express both our joy and our awe in being Hashem's subjects. They lead to the closeness of our relationship, and motivate Him to move from the Seat of Justice to the Throne of Compassion.

When we give to others, Hashem will give to us. We can open the gates of heaven by opening the gates of our heart. In the *Avinu Malkeinu* prayer we ask Hashem to write us in the Book of Merits. Rabbi Salomon explains, we are asking Hashem to send us opportunities to do good deeds so that we will earn the merits that can save us from evil decrees. A prayer, a smile or an encouraging word can sometimes be even more meaningful than a monetary gift. *Rosh Hashana* is called *Yom Teruah*. The *Sichot Hitchazkut* notes that the root word is *reut*, friendship. Let us focus on fostering sensitivity to others and investing energy into our relationships.

We often talk about *deveikut/devotion* to Hashem. *Bechol Derochecha* teaches that we can demonstrate this through following in Hashem's ways. We should try to spend *Rosh Hashana* doing acts of *chesed*. Caring for children or for elderly parents are acts of kindness. For those who are in shul, do not be judgmental. Be compassionate and give the benefit of the doubt, for we want Hashem to treat us the same way.

Rashi explains that the essence of the *mitzvah* of tithing is to be happy and make others happy. Those who do so are worthy of entering the World to Come immediately, without suffering after death, writes Rabbi Biderman. By giving of ourselves to others with love and joy and offering friendship and support, Hashem will look down upon us as well with a smiling countenance and bless us with a fruitful year.

Thirteen Attributes of Mercy The Bonds of Love Between G-d and Israel Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

When *Bnei Yisrael* came to *Har Sinai*, Hashem presented them with a proposal through Moshe. If you will obey me and safeguard my covenant, you will be my treasure amongst all the nations. Not merely because you are the descendants of the *avot*, but because you are going to undertake to

become a kingdom of priests and holy nation, one that will try to restore what existed in *Gan Eden* before Adam sinned. Their mission would be to spread the name of Hashem throughout the world and perhaps in the process save humanity. *Bnei Yisrael* answered as one, "Whatever Hashem says we will do."

Moshe then went up and told Hashem that the *kallah* is willing. There would be a marriage between Hashem and the Jewish people.

Bnei Yisrael heard the Ten Commandments. Moshe took the book of the covenant, the *Torah*, and read it out to them just as we read

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a *ketubah* under a *chuppah*. Moshe then went up to heaven to get the *luchot* and the Jews sinned with *cheit haegel*. They declared *naaseh v'nishma* three times. It was a *chazaka*. And still they failed.

At *Har Sinai*, Hashem made it very clear that he would be swift to punish and very generous in His reward. But the gifts would come on condition. When the Jews sinned with *cheit haegel*, Hashem told Moshe that He wanted to wipe them out and create a new nation from him. Moshe countered, "If so, erase me from your book." Under the *chuppa*, after the Rabbi reads the *ketubah*, it's handed to the *chatan* who gives it to his *kallah*. Moshe was supposed to transfer the *ketubah*, the *luchot*, to the Jewish people. Instead he broke it and the contract became null and void.

Moshe began to plead for the people, but he couldn't do so on the basis of the covenant because it was now null and void. So he pleaded in the merit of the *avot* who never abrogated their deal and were true to the covenant. He managed to get a reprieve that they would die slowly and the next generation who were less than 20 years old and not liable for punishment would enter Israel.

Moshe had 4 questions- three of which he got a positive answer to. The first was that the *Shechina* would return to be with *Am Yisrael*, the second that they would continue to be the chosen nation, the third that Hashem should teach him His ways, and the fourth, "*Hareini na et kevodecha*- Show me Your Glory." The Malbim explains that *kevodcha* means your

soul, your essential part that makes you -you. *Chazal* explain that he was really asking- Why do good people suffer and evil people flourish?

When Moshe went up to heaven the first time to get the *luchot*, he saw Hashem writing that He is slow to anger. He asked Him if that meant only for righteous people. Hashem answered that it also referred to evil people. Moshe said, "Wipe out the evil ones." Hashem replied, "You will yet see that you will need this." When the Jews sinned with *cheit haegel* and Moshe went up to plead for forgiveness, Hashem said- "Didn't you say I should be slow to anger only for good people?" Moshe replied, "Didn't you say to me, even for evil doers?" The deal was Hashem would no longer lead us with judgement but with mercy.

Days of Judgement Unlike Any Other Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

Chazal tell us, "*Adam nidon b'chol yom*- Every Jew is judged every day." What is the role of *Rosh Hashana* then? What is the point of having a specific day in the year for judgement if we are judged every day? Let's examine how a person is judged in a human court. If an offender violated a law and there's proof, he's brought to court. After a long judicial process, a verdict might be released that the person is guilty and he is punished. The sentence he gets depends on the law and the judge. Hashem's judgement is very different. From *Matan Torah* onward, Hashem built into the world a system where our actions would have automatic consequences. When we do something positive, positive energy is released within the person and the world and *visa versa*.

If a person touches a hot cup of water, he'll automatically pull his hand away. Our eyes just see it happening in a split second but in reality, it's a lot more complex. The person's fingers send a message to the brain which sends a message back to the person to

remove his fingers. It happens so quickly we don't realize what is going on. All we see is what the eye sees. So too, when we do something positive, positive energy is released from above which will affect the physical and spiritual gifts that will come down to us from heaven. The effects are both individual and global. The combination of our actions will affect world events. And it is built into nature. This is what *Chazal* meant when they said, "The reward for a *mitzva* is a *mitzva*." The good deed itself has a reward built into it by automatically releasing positive energies. So too sins create negative energy that lead to more sins. This is described in *Tehilim*, "Hashem is your shadow." There are no decisions that need to be made. Consequences are built into our actions.

How can we speak about a specific time of judgement if the state of the world changes constantly based on our actions? Rav Bloch explains. It can happen that a bad person will do something good and a good person will do something bad. There's a difference though

between judging specific acts of a person and looking at him in a general sense. There's a difference between saying a person is compassionate or generous and saying that a person gave a one-time donation. So too when we speak about judgement every day, we speak about specific deeds that were done on that day. It doesn't have to go through a process of judgment as it automatically affects reality. But on *Rosh Hashana*, it's about looking at the whole picture.

In a well run business, there might be a daily accounting of profit and losses. But that doesn't help the owner much. If he wants to know overall if his business is profitable, he has to look at the total gains and losses. That's the reason for an annual audit. It is then that the owner can figure out what steps to take to make the business more profitable. On *Rosh Hashana*, Hashem looks at the general picture. It's asking, "Who am I?" Not just- "What did I do?" Am I a person who has good character traits and is doing what I am supposed to do or not?