



PARSHAS KI SEITZEI

5772
SHALOSH SEUDAH
TORAH

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

\$1.00 EACH

Seek Hashem

Building a Home with Proper Intentions

"כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חֲדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֵה לְגִגְגְּךָ וְלֹא תָשִׂים דָּמִים בְּבֵיתְךָ כִּי יִפֹּל הַנֶּפֶל מִמֶּנּוּ"¹
When you build a new home, you shall make a [guard] rail for your roof, and [thus] not bring blood-guilt upon your house, if anyone falling should fall from there."

When building a new home, one should bear in mind the purpose of his endeavor: to fulfill the mitzvos incumbent upon a Jewish home; for example, the mitzvah of building a guardrail on a roof (if it is used as a balcony).

Our intentions are very powerful. They affect the nature of what we are producing.¹ The women who spun the thread for the curtains of the Mishkan were very focused on the purpose of their task. They kept on repeating, 'This is for the Mikdash, these are for the Peroches.' By concentrating on their lofty objective, the work of their hands was infused with G-dliness and the forces of evil could not approach it.²

Thus, the Be'er Mayim Chaim explains the above mentioned verse as follows: When you build your home, do so with the objective of fulfilling the mitzvah of building a guardrail for your roof. Thereby, the presence of Hashem will dwell in your home and, ואל תשים דמים בביתך, the evil forces which cause harm will be banished from it.

Building the Bais HaMikdash

The Third Bais HaMikdash will not be built by man but will descend from heaven complete³.

It is a mitzvah to build the Bais HaMikdash, "וְעָשִׂיתָ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם"⁴, You shall build a Mikdash for me and I will dwell within it. It would seem that we are being deprived from the mitzvah of building the Third Bais HaMikdash.

When we build a Jewish home for the sake of doing mitzvos, we cause the Third Bais HaMikdash to be built in heaven. This is especially so when we build a Bais HaMedrash, which is solely dedicated to Torah study and prayer.² We beautify the Bais HaMedrash, and thereby the Bais HaMikdash, through focused, uninterrupted Torah study and fervent prayer.

"מִשְׁכַּנּוֹת אַבִּיר יַעֲקֹב" (תהלים קלב:ה) is gematria (כי תבנה בית חדש), a dwelling place for the strong one of Yaakov (they both equal 1211). Building a new home for the sake of serving Hashem builds the Third Bais HaMikdash.

Building the Bais HaMikdash of Time

¹ The Bnei Yissaschar notes that when the generation of dispersion built their tower, they prefaced each stage of production with declarations of intent, ("בראשית יא:ג,ד), "הבה נלבנה לבנים, הבה נבנה לנו עיר ומגדל..." (let us make bricks, let us build a city and a tower. They kept their focus on the purpose of their enterprise which was to fight Hashem so that the powers of evil should dwell on their edifice.

² This is only if we do so with the proper intentions. We must not build a Bais HaMedrash in order to promote ourselves with a grand edifice like the generation of dispersion who built their tower for the sake of "ונעשה לנו שם" (זוהר). (making themselves a name.

Rosh Hashana is the Bais HaMikdash of time. (This was explained at length last week.)

On Yom Tov there is a Mitzvah to ascend to the Bais HaMikdash. However, there is no imperative to do so on Rosh Hashana because we are already in the Bais HaMikdash - of time. We only prostrate before Hashem in the Bais HaMikdash. The exception is on Rosh Hashana when we are in the Bais HaMikdash of time.³

If Rosh Hashana is a Bais HaMikdash, then we are commanded to build it. How do we build Rosh Hashana?

By preparing ourselves in prayer, repentance and charity during the month of Elul, we build and prepare the Bais HaMikdash of time. The Gemaraⁿ refers to Rosh Hashana as ריש שתא, the beginning of the year. כי תבנה בית חדש is gematria ריש שתא (they both equal 1211). We build the Bais HaMikdash of time through our spiritual efforts during the month of Elul.

Preserving the Inspiration of Rosh Hashana

After stating כי תבנה בית חדש, which can be interpreted to allude to the building of the Bais HaMikdash of time, the Torah exhorts: Erect a guard-rail for your roof so that you should not fall. Make sure you do not tumble from the heights of Rosh Hashana.

We erect the fence to protect our achievements of Rosh Hashana by constantly seeking inspiration through the study of Musar. Consistent spiritual growth is only sustained through constant review of the principles of Torah, "אין היראה נלמדת אלא מן הקריאה הבלתי נפסקת".

Further in the Parsha, the Torah instructs a newly-married husband to focus on building a relationship with his wife for an entire year.¹ The mazal (zodiac sign) of Elul is בתולה, a maiden. The mitzvah of remaining with a new wife for an entire year intimates that the inspiration of Elul should accompany us throughout the entire year, until the next Elul arrives.

The Mazal of Elul

Upon seeing the corruption of the generation of the Mabul, there where angels who challenged Hashem, "Why did you create man? Look how terribly he sins." Hashem responded, "I'll send you down to Earth and expose you to the passions which man must overcome and we will see if *you* can overcome the evil inclination."

These angels were cast down to Earth and were called 'Nefilim,' the fallen ones. The Nefilim ended up sinning more grievously than all the other people and led the generation to their downfall.

There was one angel who wanted to violate a modest maiden. She told him, "I want you to give me your wings in exchange." The angel gave her his wings and she used them to fly away. She flew until the throne of G-d and begged Hashem to save her. Hashem rescued her by making her into the mazal of Elul.⁴

³ Or Yom Kippur when we are in the Kodosh Kodoshim of time. See Parshas Re'eh.

⁴ Each of the twelve tribes corresponds to a different one of the twelve months. Gad corresponds to Elul. לבני גד אליסף בן דעואל, the leader of the tribe of Gad is gematria בתולה (they both equal 443).

Seizing Elul

The months of the year were divided between Yaakov and Eisav. Yaakov received Nisan, Iyar and Sivan, while Tamuz, Av and Elul were give to Eisav.⁵ However, Yaakov seized Elul from Eisav. He was inspired by the maiden who seized the wings of the evil angel.

מזל means to flow.⁶ The character of each month flows from its mazal. The בתולה of Elul rouses us to snatch ourselves away from evil. Moshe drew inspiration from her when he beseeched Hashem for forgiveness from the sin of the Golden Calf during this month, thereby turned it into days of Divine compassion.

The בתולה of Elul teaches us not to be complacent and drown in the descending current. We must bang down the doors in Heaven to beg Hashem to save us from the evil inclination which hounds us.

Retaining Youthfulness Even Though the Year is Old

The year begins on Rosh Hashana with a freshness. As the year continues, it matures and then ages. By the time Elul arrives, the year is already old and lethargic.⁷

We beseech Hashem, "אל תשלחני לעת זקנה", do not forsake us in old age. Help us remain fresh and vigorous in Your service even though the year is already old and we are inclined to laziness. The mazal of Elul is a young girl, to remind us to retain a youthful vigorousness even in the last month of the year.

The parsha discusses a man who takes an אשה חדשה, a *new* woman as a wife. Elul – whose mazal is a young woman - is a time to renew ourselves in the service of Hashem with the enthusiasm of a beginner.⁷

Ending the year with Tikun (Spiritual Rectification)

We must be careful not to end the year without concrete improvement. Parshas Ki Setzei is filled with Tikunim. It begins with going out to war. This symbolizes our battle against the evil inclination.

Then the Torah instructs the Jewish soldier how to go about marrying a gentile woman who appealed to him. The Jewish army was comprised of the most righteous men of the nation. Anyone who feared to enter the battle because of even a slight spiritual blemish was released from duty before the battle commenced. The physical appearance of the gentile woman could not have aroused a Jewish soldier's lust. Rather, he was attracted to her because she contained within herself a Jewish soul. By marrying her according to the Torah's instructions, this soul would be rectified and able to join the Jewish people.⁸

⁵ Tishrei Cheshvan and Kislev belong to Yaakov. Teves, Shevat and Adar belong to Eisav. Just as Yaakov seized Elul, so did Mordechai grab Adar for holiness.

⁶ It is used this way in the verse, יִזְלֶמַיִם מִדְּלָיו (במדבר כד:ז), water shall flow from his wells.

⁷ Maariv is recited at night, when the day is old and we are tired and exhausted after a long day. We commence Maariv with the Shir Hamalos which discusses those "העומדים בבית ה' בלילות", who remain standing ever fresh and at attention in the house of Hashem *at night*.

Afterwards, the Torah discusses how to handle a Ben Sorer U'Moreh, a rebellious boy, so that he should not degenerate completely.

The topic of השבת אבידה, returning a lost object, is also mentioned in the parsha. The most important form of השבת אבידה is to return a neshama to Hashem. The tribe which engaged in השבת אבידה was Dan because they trailed behind the other tribes during the procession in the wilderness. They collected all the possessions that had been dropped and returned them to their owners. Elul, the month which trails at the end of the year, picks up the lost souls and restores them to their origin by inspiring them to repent.

The parsha concludes with the exhortation to remember what Amalek did to the Jewish people. They attacked the stragglers, the spiritually weakest element, who were expelled from the Clouds of Glory. Hashem keeps these lost Jews in mind constantly, devising plans on how to rectify them and will never forget how Amalek harmed them.

Seek Hashem

A Ben Sorer U'Moreh is a thirteen-year-old boy who steals money from his father and uses it to gorge himself on meat and wine. His parents punish him to no avail and they take him to the court who executes him. He is not killed for his sins, but because of his future which is doomed. The Ben Sorer U'Moreh is certain to become a robber and murderer and there is no hope that he will be rehabilitated.

The general consensus among the sages is that there never was a Ben Sorer U'Moreh and there will never be one. How can this be? We know that the Torah is the blueprint of the world and therefore everything we find in Torah must also be found in the world.

The reason there never was a Ben Sorer U'Moreh is because the Torah itself ensures that there should be none by placing nearly-impossible stipulations for declaring a boy to be a Ben Sorer U'Moreh. For one, the father and mother must be of equal height and have the same voice. It is very uncommon for a couple to be of exactly the same height and it is rare to the point of non-existence that a man and woman should have the same voice.

The Ben Sorer U'Moreh is the only one case where the Torah tells us that a person is hopeless; he will definitely turn out evil. The fact that there never was a Ben Sorer U'Moreh and that there can never be one teaches us that there is no such thing as a Jew who is lost forever. Every Jewish soul is ממעלי אלקי, a spark of G-dliness, and it can never be doomed.

If there will never be a Ben Sorer U'Moreh, our sages ask, why is it written in the Torah at all? The answer given is, so that we should דרוש וקבל שכר, expound upon it and receive reward for studying Torah.

Upon delving deeply into the topic of the Ben Sorer U'Moreh, we realize that he can never exist. Thereby we come to the conclusion that a Jewish soul can never be lost.

By being דורש the topic of Ben Sorer U'Moreh, we will come to be דורש, which also means seek, Hashem. When we realize that we are immutably good because our essence is G-dly, we will be inspired to seek closeness to Hashem. "דַּרְשׁוּ ה' וְעִזּוּ בִקְשׁוּ פָּנָיו תָּמִיד", search for Hashem and his strength, constantly seek his countenance.

In the psalm of 'L'David Hashem' which we recite during Elul, it says, "לֵךְ אָמַר לִבִּי בִקְשׁוּ." Rashi interprets this verse as follows: My heart carries a message from you, "Search for my countenance!" In response, את פניך ה' אבקש, I search for you.

Hashem shared the secret of essential goodness with us. In response, we search for closeness to him.

The Potential of the Troubled Teen

One of the Sages, Rabbi Yonoson, maintained that there once was a Ben Sorer U'Moreh and recounted that he actually sat on his grave.⁶ How was it possible for there to be a Ben Sorer U'Moreh? As discussed above, it is almost impossible for a boy to be declared a Ben Sorer U'Moreh. Furthermore, as Rabbi Akiva Eiger asks, it is forbidden to sit on a grave.

R' Chaim Vital once came in to his rebbe, the Ari HaKadosh, and the Ari stood up for him. He explained that he was rising before the neshama of בניהו בן יהוידע which had come into R' Chaim Vital. R' Chaim could not imagine how or why the neshama of בניהו went into him.

Later, when they were walking, the Ari pointed to a stone saying, "This is the burial place of בניהו בן יהוידע."

R' Chaim then realized that he had unknowingly sat on this stone and engaged in studying Torah on the day that his Rebbe had seen the soul of בניהו in him.

From this episode we learn that when someone sits on a grave and studies Torah, the soul of the person buried there goes into him.

The Ben Ish Chai also sat on the grave of בניהו בן יהוידע and thereby merited reaching tremendous heights in Torah. Therefore, he named his work בן איש חי, after the verse, "בְּנֵיהוּ בֶן יְהוֹדָע בֶּן אִישׁ חַיִּי", he was full of life even after death⁷.

We can suggest that a similar thing happened to Rabbi Yonoson. There was a boy who caused much heartache for his parents. He began deteriorating and soon closely resembled a Ben Sorer U'Moreh. However, because of the many technical constraints the Torah placed on declaring a boy a Ben Sorer U'Moreh, he was not executed. Later, this boy took hold of himself and began working on himself until he became a great tzaddik. Inadvertently, Rabbi Yonoson sat on his grave and was infused with his soul. This Ben Sorer U'Moreh had become such a great tzaddik that his soul propelled R' Yonoson to lofty spiritual heights, until he became the great Tanna we know as Rabbi Yonoson.

Not only was there never a Jew who was hopeless, but look at what the least promising boy can become!

Ben Sorer U'Moreh is a parsha which has no practical applications. It screams to the fallen, low Jew "You have hidden powers! You have a holy soul! Wake up!"

"כי יהיה לאיש בן סורר ומורה", If a man will have a son who is a Ben Sorer U'Moreh, is gematria "העדה כולם קדושים ובתוכם ה'" (they both equal 1146). There can never be a true Ben Sorer U'Moreh because the Jewish soul is a spark of G-dliness itself.

This Shabbos has the power to lift up fallen souls. This is especially so of the Shalosh Seudos of parshas Ki Setzei because Shalosh Seudos is the feast of Yaakov Avinu who was מטתו שלימה, all of his children were part of the nation of Hashem. (Unlike Avraham's son Yishmael and Yitzchak's son Eisav who are not.)

יעקוב אבינו לא מת gematria is רבי יונתן, Yaakov Avinu did not die (they both equal 728). Rabbi Yonoson teaches that even the most spiritually fallen Jew can become a tzaddik because he is a descendant of Yaakov.

May we merit the fulfillment of the prophecy, אז תשמח בתולה במחול, 'Then the בתולה will rejoice in a circle dance,' with the power of בתולה.

"ונזכה לשנת גאולה וישועה"

May we merit a year of redemption and salvation

^א דברים כב:ח

^ב זוהר לספר ויקרא, ח"ג דף נ ע"א

^ג רש"י סוכה דף מ"א ע"א

^ד שמות כה:ח

^ה כריתות דף ה' ע"ב

^ו מסילת ישרים פרק כ"ה

^ז דברים כד:ה

^ח שפת אמת

^ט עיין באור החיים הק'

^י תהלים קה:ד

^{יא} סנהדרין דף ע"א ע"א

^{יב} שמואל ב' כג:כ

^{יג} ברכות דף י"ח ע"ב