

Parashat Ki Tavo

פרשת "כי תבוא"

Book of Deuteronomy

The rabbis responsible for the order of the *parashiot* (weekly portions) in the Torah clearly had a purpose when they placed last week's *Parashat Ki Taytze* (כי תצא) alongside this week's *Parashat Ki Tavo* (כי תבוא). The juxtaposition of these two portions helps us understand the tremendous responsibility placed upon us – the Jewish people. How?

It appears to me that *Parashat Ki Taytze* emphasizes the lessons learned by the Jewish people during their extended stay in Egypt. The nation-building experience of going from slavery to freedom fostered in us an awareness and sensitivity towards the underdog. We see this in the 72 *mitzvot* (commandments) listed in *Parashat Ki Taytze* concerning human relationships – how we relate one towards the other. Some examples are those *mitzvot* concerning the rights of women, treatment of neighbor's property, visitor's obligations to their hosts, fair treatment of workers, treatment of the dead and more.

In this week's portion, *Parashat Ki Tavo*, the Jewish people have already left Egypt en route to the promised land of Israel. The lessons that we now need as a people, in order to enter Israel (this time as a sovereign people), are different than those that we learned from our time in Egypt.

There are two chapters of *Parashat Ki Tavo* that essentially complete the *mitzvot* that we learned in the previous portion, *Ki Taytze*. These are the social, legal, ethical and ritual *mitzvot*, such as taking responsibility for the weakest groups in our society (widows etc.), preventing cruelty to animals and avoiding excessive punishment. But there is also a lengthy list of frightening curses that hang over us as a threat in case the Jewish people do not behave in a suitable and seemly manner. When we were in Egypt, we witnessed the plagues that befell the Egyptians as a result of their inappropriate behavior. What plagues would befall us should we reach Israel and not perform those *mitzvot* commanded us?!! (The Egyptian's fate made clear the price paid by others who were responsible for our fate; how much more severe the punishment when we are responsible for our own fate!).

This is perhaps the message for us today, learning from *Parashat Ki Tavo*. Now, the responsibility falls entirely on our shoulders as members of the sovereign State of Israel, to maintain a just society. The triumphs and failures of such an endeavor are

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also ours and ours alone. Are we capable of such a tremendous responsibility – to effect change, to right wrongs? The answer is a resounding “yes”! The answer lies in our readiness to do *teshuvah* - to repent – to constantly be willing to reassess, revise, to be open to change as needed. This after all is the purpose of this month of *Elul* – and of course of all the *Tishrei* holidays that are coming up.

Our fate is in our hands. If only we knew how to act in order to receive the blessing found in this week’s portion:

יְצוּ יְהוָה אֱתֶךָ, אֶת-הַבְּרָכָה, בְּאַסְמִיךְ, וּבְכֹל מְשַׁלַּח יָדְךָ; וּבִרְכֶךָ--בְּאֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ.

God will ordain blessings for you upon your barns and upon all your undertakings. God will bless you in the land which your God is giving you.

Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Kinneret Shiryon

Kehillat YOZMA, Modi'in

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