



# Parshas Ki Savo

For the week ending 21 Elul 5758  
11 - 12 September 1998

## Overview

**W**hen Bnei Yisrael dwell in the Land of Israel, its first fruits are to be taken to the Temple and given to the Kohen in a ceremony expressing recognition that it is Hashem who guides the history of the Jewish People throughout all ages. This passage forms one of the central parts of the Haggadah that we read at the Passover Seder. On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and the seventh years of the seven-year shemitta cycle of tithes, a person must recite a disclosure stating that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate people in the prescribed manner. With this mitzvah Moshe concludes the commandments that Hashem has told him to give to the Jewish People. Moshe exhorts them to walk in Hashem's ways, because they are set aside as a treasured people to Hashem. When Bnei Yisrael cross the Jordan River they are to make a new commitment to the Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah is to be written on them in the world's seventy primary languages, after which they are to be covered over with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes will stand on Mount Gerizim, and half on Mount Eval, and the levi'im will stand in a valley between the two mountains. There the levi'im will recite 12 commandments and all the people will answer "amen" to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed upon Bnei Yisrael. These blessings are both physical and spiritual. However if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe details a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.

## Insights

*A PRESENT FROM THE QUEEN*

**"And you will rejoice in all the good which Hashem gives you" (26:11)**

**W**hen you get a present from the Queen, what's more important to you: The present itself or the inscription "Presented by Her Majesty to...?"

When we rejoice in all the good that Hashem gives us, what foremost makes us happy is not what we receive, rather from Whom we receive it.

*GETTING TO THE TOP*

**"Since you did not serve Hashem, your G-d with joy and goodness of heart" (28:47)**

**I**t was common knowledge that anyone who got to the top of the skyscraper earned a prize of spectacular proportions. The only trouble was that to get there you had to walk. A hundred floors is a long way by elevator — but by foot...

They both started out together. The first ten floors were easy. The second twenty floors were harder. By the time they had reached the fiftieth floor, they were both gasping for breath. Sweat was pouring from them. 56, 57, 58.

On and on they climbed. Could this be easier than Hilary and Tenzing scaling Everest? 75, 76, 77... By the 80th floor, they had both stopped walking, now they were crawling on their hands and knees. As they reached the 89th floor, one of them fell back on the cool stone and gasped "That's it! I can't go on — I'm finished!"

"I can't go on either," said the other, "But I'm not giving up!"

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With every bone in his body aching, he clawed his way up one more floor. He turned the corner and saw the sign in front of him: "90th Floor." It was then that he saw what was written underneath: "If you get this far — you can take the elevator. Congratulations!"

There before him were the open doors of an elevator. With a weak tired smile, he crawled in and pushed the golden button. The doors closed and he sped to the top of the building and the grand prize.

Life is about getting to the top.

Some people think that "getting to the top" means appearing on a TV talk show or owning a Fortune 500 company. But there's only one "top" that's really important — the top of the spiritual ladder. Climbing the spiritual ladder, however, is not so easy. Sometimes it seems that it's just too much. Why exert yourself to climb and climb? Why not just stay where you are and coast?

Life is like the down escalator. Just to stay where you are, you have to keep walking. If you stand still, you'll go down. To rise, you have to do a lot more than walk — you have to run. In this week's Parsha, we read horrifying predictions of what will happen to the Jewish People if they fail to keep the Torah. But it's not enough just to keep the Torah. The above verse teaches us that the full weight of punishment will result merely if the Jewish People fail to serve G-d with joy and goodness of heart.

This is very difficult to understand. Why should we be punished so severely merely for failing to do the mitzvos with joy?

Our negative inclination is no fool. He doesn't tell us to go and steal. He doesn't tell us to start worshipping idols. He starts us off on the "baby slopes." He starts by suggesting that we do something that doesn't seem to be a sin at all. He makes the mitzvos feel heavy when we do them. He suggests we do them without enthusiasm. And after a steady diet of this, there comes a day when we're under some kind of pressure and he helps us to forget to do the mitzvah altogether. From then on, bit by bit, he encourages us to bigger and bigger things until we find ourselves looking in the face of an idol.

This was exactly what happened in the generation when Jerusalem was destroyed. They didn't start off by worshipping idolatry. They started off by feeling that doing the mitzvos was a burden. Fine. But what do you do if your negative drive has already got you on the "baby slopes?"

What do you do if you have already lost the feeling of joy when you do a mitzvah? What if you already feel apathetic? You can't argue with an emotion. You can't fight feelings with logic. If you feel apathetic, trotting out a list of logical reasons why you should improve isn't going to help. The only way you can fight feeling is with feeling.

Psychology posits a syndrome called "cognitive dissonance." Cognitive dissonance is when we buy a watch at a store for \$200 and later that day we see an advertisement for an almost identical watch for \$130. We think to ourselves: "My watch must be better." Even though someone could prove to us that the watches are practically identical, we still feel that our watch is better. Why? Because, we invested in it. "It's my watch which belongs to me and I own it."

When we invest in something, we feel it must be good. After all, I invested in it, didn't I?

When we invest tremendous energy into a project, you can't tell me it's valueless. This is the key to dealing with apathy. When we invest our time, our energy, our love, our very selves into something — we value it. With this principle, we can understand how to generate a love of the mitzvos in our hearts. To love the mitzvos we must invest in them. When we do them with all our heart, the cynical voice that tries to knock the gloss off our service of the Creator will find no receptive ear in our psyche. Subconsciously, we will say to it: "You can't tell me these mitzvos are a drag. I put my guts into them. I have invested my love and my life." You can't fight emotion with logic. Only emotion can wield an effective sword against an opposing emotion.

Sources:

*A Present From The Queen* - Tiferes Shlomo in Mayana shel Torah

*Getting To The Top* - Ksav Sofer

# Haftorah

## Yeshayahu 60:1-22

In this, the sixth of the seven Haftoras of Consolation, the Prophet Yeshayahu calls on Jerusalem to arise from the pain of darkness and shadow, and to shine to the world in her full glory. The light of redemption, both physical and spiritual, is being radiated on her. Her long-banished children are returning, and in their wake are the nations of the world who have acknowledged Hashem and that the Jewish People are His emissaries. This redemption, unlike those that have preceded it, will be the final and complete one. "Never again will your sun set, nor your moon be withdrawn, for Hashem shall be unto you an eternal light, and ended will be your days of mourning."

ANNUALS & PERENNIALS

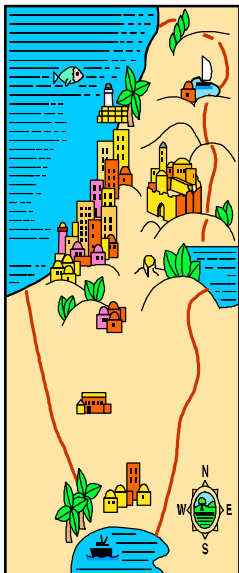
**"And your people, they are all righteous, forever shall they inherit the Land, a branch of My planting..." (60:21)**

People think that re-incarnation is an Eastern concept. It is. A Middle-Eastern concept. One of Judaism's gift to Eastern thought is reincarnation. If a person doesn't follow the path that G-d indicates in this world, his soul will return until he corrects his character flaws. The above verse alludes to this process: "And your people are all righteous..." The unspoken question arises: "They're all righteous?! I see many people who are a long way from being righteous!" To which the next phrase answers — "a branch of My planting" — those who fail to achieve righteousness will be "re-planted" many times until their good deeds finally come to fruition. Even the least righteous person returns and returns to this world until he eventually becomes virtuous and noble.

*Mahram Mizrachi in Mayana shel Torah*

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### THE CRITICAL CONDITION



Bnei Yisrael were commanded that, upon arrival in Eretz Yisrael after 40 years in the wilderness, they must assemble at Mount Gerizim and Mount Eval to hear the blessings and curses spelled out in the Torah (Devarim 27:15-26) for those who fulfill the laws of Hashem and the contrary. In explaining why this was necessary so soon upon their entry, the Torah tells us: "For you are crossing the Jordan to come and inherit the land which Hashem, your G-d, is giving you, and you shall inherit it and dwell in it. And you will observe all of the statutes and laws which I place before you today." (Devarim 11:31-32) Here is clearly spelled out the formula for successful conquest and possession of Eretz Yisrael. In order that we should succeed in inheriting and dwelling in the Land, the Torah tells us we must observe all of Hashem's laws. It was therefore necessary to dramatically communicate a public declaration of blessings and curses upon entry into the Land, to drive home the message that possession of the Land was conditional on observance of the commandments.

*Malbim, Parshas Re'eh*

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