

Dvar Torah for Parshat Ki Tavo/Elul

Based on some *Likutey Moharan* and some *The Aleph-Bet Book*

[Any and all of the misfortunes mentioned may befall you] "because you didn't serve the Lord your God happily, with a glad heart, when you had it good."

(*Deuteronomy* 28:47)

When things aren't working out well for a person, it's because he's separated that part of his life from God and put himself in charge instead...When a person realizes that things are not working out, he can be certain that he is conceited, that he is thinking, "I'll rule." He must repent by humbling himself...The main time for repenting is the month of Elul.

(*Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #82)

It is a super-mitzvah to always be happy.

(*ibid.*, Lesson #24)

Dejection, i.e. despair, leads to hard luck. Hard luck empowers the attribute of Judgement.

(*The Aleph-Bet Book, Hamtakat Hadinim* [Sweetening Judgements] A2)

When a person is depressed, Heaven considers ways to harm him.(*ibid.* A50)

Depression arouses judgement.(*ibid.* A99)

One who is always happy thereby succeeds. (*ibid.*, *Hatzlachah* [Success] B1)

Now, while I'm running away from my enemies (*Deuteronomy* 28:25), picking at my open sores (vv. 27, 35), eating hamburger made out of my children (vv. 53-54), driven mad and unable to rest (vv. 34, 65)—**now** I'm supposed to be happy and serve the Lord with joy (*Psalms* 100:2)?!

Yes. Of course, it is quite difficult to get up and dance when troubles are raining down. On the other hand, that's not necessarily what's required. What's required is a change of perspective. After all, the curses - the hard luck, things not working out—are not a result of not doing mitzvot. They are the result of the lack of a happy heart.

Imagine being a king and being able to have your every wish fulfilled. Being able to command, "Off with her head," can go to one's head. Even though few, if any, of us are kings or queens, we do have it good, better than ancient royalty ever had it. How do we respond to having it good?

One who is conceited responds to good he receives in terms of what it adds to his prestige, whether in the eyes of others or in his own eyes. Anything that he accrues—knowledge, pleasure, honor, power, money, mitzvot—has value only because it enhances *him*. When he has to give up some of the limelight to others because they have more, or because they are somehow "better" than he, his good is tarnished and he can't enjoy it.

In contrast, one who is modest is delighted with whatever good he receives. This is because he realizes that he actually deserves nothing, and what he has is a gift with which God has graced him.

So, what's with all the curses? Why do so many things have to not go my way? And for so long! The curses, like every occurrence in life, are a call from Hashem. The point is not the suffering they bring,

nor the mechanical observance they may induce. The point is to show us, that despite our individual and collective failures, God **cares**. God knows we can improve. How soon does the process begin? Some of us will read the warning notice on the package and get the message immediately. Others will need to be whacked in the head a few times before becoming enlightened.

The point is to turn our newly acquired hindsight into foresight: Torah and mitzvot need enthusiasm. We have to have to *joie de Judaism*. This is why it is a super-mitzvah to always be *b'simcha* (happy, cheerful, upbeat, enthusiastic). One who is genuinely humble and modest will always be *b'simcha*. If one's humility is such that his joy in the mitzvot moves him to dance, then he has succeeded in giving the Kingship back to God (*Likutey Halakhot, Birkhat Hodaah* 6:30-31).

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

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