



From the desk of
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Ki Teitzei

HAMELECH

Just Start

The Torah says: When you (singular) go out to war against your enemies and Hashem, your Almighty, will deliver them into your hands and you will take captives.

Now, the pasuk does not even go into the details of the actual battle. It just says that you go out to fight. This seems to show that that is all which is required from our end. We must put up a fight. Just go. Hashem will do the rest.

Beit Yosef (Magid Meisharim) and Ohr HaChayim HaKadosh explain that the pesukim refer also to man's battle against his own evil inclination.

The female captive is to cry for her father and mother for an entire month. Some say that this is a reference to Ellul, a time for tears and yearning to return to our roots.

The most important thing in fighting the yetzer horah is simply to start. Don't give up. Keep on trying.

HaKadosh Baruch Hu says to Yisrael: Dear children, open up for Me an opening of repentance the size of a needle point and I will open for you an entranceway which wagons can pass through! (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 5:2)

Fiery Brit

Rashi to Shemot 12:5 teaches: Beginnings are difficult. If you accept upon yourself to do all the mitzvot, life will be pleasant from then on.

Avuya had a child and invited many people to the *brit*. Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua were there as well. They began speaking words of Torah and a fire descended. Avuya saw the fire and feared that his house would burn down. The Tannaim reassured him that this was a spiritual fire and no harm would be done.

Avuya exclaimed: If this is what Torah can do, I want my son to learn Torah!

Now that sounds beautiful, but since he only said so due to that fire, that is why eventually this boy Elisha went off the *derech hayashar*.

A *brit* is meant to be an inauguration of a child for *avodat Hashem*. If we mix in other *kavanot*, that could have us lose out on the greatness of the mitzvah. The *brit* is the beginning of the child's mitzvah career. Therefore we bless: Just as he entered the Covenant, so too may he enter Torah, the wedding canopy and good deeds.

Teach 'em Young

In Avot (2:8), Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai said of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya: Praiseworthy is she who gave birth to him! Chananya's wife went around to all the study halls in her city and asked the rabbis to pray for her child-to-be to be a talmid chacham. After he was born, she kept his



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cradle in the Beit Medrash so that only words of Torah would enter his ears.

In Avot (4:2), Ben Azai teaches us to run to *mitzvot* and to flee from sins. Medrash Shmuel explains that running to a mitzvah means to get it started. A good start is more than halfway to the finish line!

It's a great idea to get to shul early in the morning. Great reward awaits those who do so. You will have a stupendous day. It's great to be one of the first ten and even greater to be first of the ten.

Once a person begins heading down the wrong road, it's a downhill slide. As David Hamelech teaches (Tehillim 1): Praiseworthy is the man who has not gone with the counsel of the wicked and has not stood in the path of sinners and has not sat in the company of scoffers. R' Shimon ben Pazi explains: One who walks with evildoers will stand with them and then sit with them.

In Parashat Pinchus, the Torah stresses that Datan and Aviram were rabble-rousers and that it was they who stirred up strife in the Korach rebellion. But Korach's sons did not die. The Torah is stressing that since Datan and Aviram were behind the whole rebellion and instigated it, that is why nothing remains of them or their offspring. Whereas Korach himself, although he made a

fatal mistake, nonetheless his children saved themselves at the last moment. Datan and Aviram were trouble-makers from start to finish.

Hairy Mountain

One day, Hashem will slaughter the evil inclination. It will appear as a mountain to the righteous and as a piece of hair to the wicked. The wicked will cry and exclaim: How is it that we were not able to overcome this tiny strand of hair?! (Suka 52)

So what is it really? A hair or a mountain? The answer is: Both! It starts out as a hair. But if you get caught up in it and sin repeatedly it becomes like a spider-web or like thick ropes which pull a wagon.

For the righteous who did not sin, it keeps coming back at them, stronger and stronger. They get stronger and it gets stronger. They become greater and are given even greater challenges. Eventually it is a mountain, but because they refused to take that first puff (of a cigarette) or bite (of a cheeseburger) that is why Hashem gives them the koach to get stronger and stronger until they scale the whole mountain.

That is why it is so important to learn well the first five minutes of the learning session. Start off strong and you have the upper hand over the



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yetzer horah. Do not let him in. If you start the seder schmoozing about this and that, you may just glance at your watch an hour later and wonder how you got carried away and wasted so much time.

Just Say "Thank You"

There was once a *chatan* and *kallah* who needed a lot of help with basic needs. Reb Shneur Zalman of Liadi, the Baal Hatanya, decided to help out. He went to the Rav of the city and together they made a list of the affluent locals whom could be approached to enlist their assistance.

The Baal Hatanya noticed that a certain name was absent. The Rav explained that that man never participated in collections. The Baal Hatanya insisted on visiting him first. The Rav thought that it was a waste of time, but out of respect to the Rebbe, he accompanied the Rebbe.

Reb Shneur Zalman knocked on the door. The rich man heard their whole speech about the poor bride and groom. He then pulled out a rusty small coin and handed it to the Rabbis. The town Rav was about to explode, but the Baal Hatanya signaled to him to be silent. The Baal Hatanya simply said, "Shkoiach," took the coin and prepared to leave. At that, the rich man said,

"Wait a minute," and headed out to a side room. He returned with ten ruble and gave it to the Rebbe.

The Rebbe smiled and said, "A Grosse Yasher Koach!" and once again prepared to go.

Now the philanthropist asked, "Wait a minute. How much do you think you'll need to cover wedding costs?"

"Ten thousand rubles" was the reply.

"I'll give you the whole lot," he said, "And do you know why I did what I did? Because you did what you did!"

He explained, "Years ago, I was approached and asked to give *tzedakah*. All I had was that one coin. I gave it to the man and he threw it back at my face. Then and there, I decided that whoever asks me for *tzedakah*, no matter how much money I have, I will give him that coin. If he takes it appreciatively, maybe I'll give him more. If he refuses to take it, I will not give him any more. Now, years later, you are the first to take the rusty coin. So you got the whole deal."

We see how important it is to allow ourselves and others to do that first small step in the right direction. *Mitzvah goreret mitzvah*, so more are bound to follow.

Shabbat Shalom!

Mordechai Malka