

**DARCHAI NOAM****Its ways are ways of pleasantness - דרכיה דרכי נעם**

(Mishlei 3:17)

Parashat Tetzaveh, February 2014

[darchai.noam@gmail.com](mailto:darchai.noam@gmail.com)

How can the Parasha help us grow this week?

**Tetzaveh – give people hope**

In this week's Parasha, we continue to learn about the building of the Mishkan and its associated utensils. The focus has shifted from the actual building itself to the special clothes of the Kohen Gadol, which contained the precious stones that were donated by the Nasiim (princes) of the tribes. In last week's Darchai Noam we learnt the story about how the Nasiim came to donate the precious stones.

Hashem's instructions called for a number of different specific types of precious stones. The question arises – where did the Nasiim find these particular precious stones in the middle of the wilderness? The Gemara (Yoma 75a) explains that these stones were brought to the Jewish people in a miraculous fashion, by the clouds, along with the manna.

It is fairly clear where most of the other materials came from. Bnei Yisrael had their flocks of animals (to supply skins and material) and they had an abundance of gold and silver which they brought with them from Mitzrayim. But the source of one other material is not so obvious. Where did they get so much timber from? There are no trees in the desert. The Midrash<sup>1</sup> explains that Yaakov knew that the Mishkan was to be built. When Yaakov came down to Mitzrayim he planted acacia trees. He told his children that when Bnei Yisrael were to leave Mitzrayim over 200 years later they should cut down the trees and take the timber with them. This would ensure that they had the materials needed to build the Mishkan.

The above details raise a question. If Yaakov was concerned that Bnei Yisrael would have the materials needed for the building of the Mishkan, then why didn't he also provide them with the precious stones? Alternatively, if the precious stones were to be provided in a miraculous manner, why couldn't the timber also be provided in a miraculous manner? Why did Yaakov decide to provide specifically the trees?<sup>2</sup>

Imagine how Bnei Yisrael felt while they were in the midst of the Egyptian slavery. After trudging home at night after another back-breaking day, they probably felt that this torture would never end. All they could remember was slavery. They were close to giving up any hope for change. However, as they arrived home they couldn't help but see the glorious acacia trees, standing tall. That would remind them of Yaakov's instructions. One day they would leave Mitzrayim and take those trees with them, to build a Mishkan to house Hashem's presence. Those acacia trees must have provided Bnei Yisrael with much hope and comfort during an unbelievably difficult period. Perhaps that is why Yaakov chose specifically the acacia trees to provide to his descendants.

Shabbat is the spiritual highlight of the week. After Shabbat ends, we may feel sad with the realisation that we have to wait another six days until the next Shabbat. Some people have a

<sup>1</sup> Midrash Tanchuma, Terumah 9

<sup>2</sup> This is based on an idea that I heard from Rav Zev Leff.

beautiful custom of preparing for Shabbat early in the week. I know of one family that sets out the tablecloth and prepares the candles on Saturday night. As soon as one Shabbat is finished, they are already looking forward to and preparing for the next Shabbat. When they come home each evening from a hard day at school or work, the candles and the tablecloth remind them that Shabbat is coming. This is a great source of comfort and hope for them as they struggle with the daily challenges that are a part of everyday life. This family has applied Yaakov's idea with the acacia trees to their weekly routine!

How can we apply Yaakov's idea of the acacia trees to our interpersonal relationships?

We all need hope. In particular, when people are going through a difficult time, they are in greater need of hope. Their problems may seem overwhelming to such an extent that they can't see any way out. If they have something positive to look forward to in the future this can make a significant difference. They often need someone objective to help them to see the light at the end of the tunnel. As the saying goes: "You can't pick yourself up by your own bootstraps".

Yet such communication requires sensitivity and thought. Merely telling someone who is going through a difficult period to "snap out of it" or to focus on something positive will probably not suffice. They may just be seeking a listening ear. However the message of the acacia trees suggests that if we can give someone hope in a sensitive and appropriate manner, we will be giving them a huge gift.

Each of us encounters struggles and stresses during a typical day. Work can be stressful. School can be difficult. Life can be hard. We can help to ease the way for others by focusing on something positive in the future. Something towards which they can look forward with optimism and joy. Perhaps ask them about their plans for the weekend, or their next holiday. If we try hard, we can always think of good things to look forward to. If we talk about those things with the people that we meet, we can strengthen them with hope and buoy them with simcha.

Of course this idea works for ourselves as well. For our own mental health, it is a good idea to set aside a regular time to think about or plan or work towards something that we are looking forward to. Even if it's only a few minutes a day, it can help us to rise above difficult times in our lives.

Let's try something this week:

1. When interacting with people, make an effort to think of something positive that they can look forward to. Gently remind them if this at regular intervals.
2. Set aside a regular time to remind yourself of something hopeful, whether it be a way out a current difficulty or an inspiration for the future.
3. Just like Yaakov's trees were a visual reminder for Bnei Yisrael, consider whether we can provide ourselves or others with a visual reminder of something positive to look forward to.

Shabbat shalom, Rabbi Ledder

\*\*\* \*\*

## **About Darchai Noam**

The passuk in Mishlei (3:17) describes the Torah as follows: "Its ways are ways of pleasantness (Darchai Noam) and all its paths are peace". The Torah is our guidebook for life. It is packed full of good advice as to how we should live our lives.

The aim of the Darchai Noam weekly email is to examine an idea from the weekly parashah relating to good middot (character traits). It will focus particularly on treating each other with respect and how to interact with each other in a more peaceful and pleasant manner. It will also suggest some practical tips for implementing these ideas in our daily lives.

By learning together each week, and making an effort to regularly put the ideas into practice, with Hashem's help we can all gradually improve our character traits and our observance of 'v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocho' – loving one's fellow as oneself.

If you know someone who might enjoy receiving this email please feel free to pass it on to them or email me their details so I can add them to the subscription list.

You are welcome to use the content of this email in any way that will help to spread the learning of Torah. However please attribute credit appropriately.

## **How to subscribe or unsubscribe**

If you would like to subscribe or unsubscribe to Darchai Noam, please send an email to [darchai.noam@gmail.com](mailto:darchai.noam@gmail.com) with the word 'subscribe' or 'unsubscribe' in the subject.