

## DARCHAI NOAM - דרכי נועם

### “Its ways are ways of pleasantness”

(Mishlei 3:17)

Tetzaveh (Shmot 27:20-30:10)  
February 2019 / Adar Aleph 5779

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How can the Parasha help us grow this week?

### Tetzaveh – giving 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 Kohen Gadol's special uniform, including the precious stones that were donated by the Nesi'im (princes) of the tribes. See last week's Darchai Noam for details about how it fell to the Nesi'im to donate these precious stones. The complete list of materials included: gold, silver, copper, blue, purple and crimson wool, linen, goat hair, ram skins dyed red, tachash skins, acacia wood, oil, spices and precious stones.

Hashem's instructions called for a number of specific types of precious stones. A question arises – where did the Nesi'im find these particular precious stones in the middle of the wilderness? The Gemara<sup>1</sup> explains that these stones were brought to the Jewish people in a miraculous fashion. They were carried by the clouds of glory and delivered directly to the Nesi'im.

The origin and sourcing of most of the other materials used to build the Mishkan is fairly clear. Bnei Yisrael had flocks of animals (to supply skins, wool and goat hair) and they had an abundance of gold, silver and copper which they brought with them from Mitzrayim. However, it is perplexing how they would have sourced so much timber. There are no trees in the desert! The Midrash explains that Yaakov Avinu knew through ruach hakodesh that the Mishkan was to be built. Therefore, when he came down to Mitzrayim he deliberately 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. His planting of the trees ensured that his descendants would have the materials needed to build the Mishkan.

However, another question arises. 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 and to plant them in Mitzrayim at that time? Was there another unique function of these trees?

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 despairing and worried that this torture would never end. All they could remember was slavery. They may have been close to giving up any hope for change. However, when they would arrive home, they couldn't help notice the tall, proud, glorious acacia trees. The strong trunks would remind them of Yaakov's instructions and in turn, the prophecy of their salvation. One day they would leave Mitzrayim and build a Mishkan to house Hashem's Presence! The acacia trees must have provided Bnei Yisrael with much-needed hope and comfort during an unbelievably difficult period.

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 beautiful custom of preparing for Shabbat early in the week. I know of one family that sets out the tablecloth on the dining

<sup>1</sup> Yoma 75a.

room table and prepares the candles on Motzai Shabbat. 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 act as a visual reminder to them that Shabbat is coming. This functions as a great source of comfort and hope for them as they struggle during the normal daily challenges that are a part of everyday life. This family has essentially 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. Even better, if they can bring Hashem into the picture, and remember that only He can bring salvation, that is the best remedy. However, these people 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. However, it may be more beneficial if we can somehow give the other person a strong, regular reminder of Hashem's salvation and boost their emunah that way. 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.

Another approach that can be helpful, is to actively remember how Hashem has provided us with salvation in the past. When we focus on what Hashem has done for us in the past, it is easier to be hopeful that He will do so again in the future.

Of course, this idea works for ourselves as well for others. 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. We should also try to actively remember all of Hashem's kindnesses that He has done for us and be sure to thank Him. 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 or something that will boost their faith that help is at hand. Gently remind them of this at regular intervals.
2. Set aside a regular time to remind yourself of something hopeful, whether it be how Hashem helped save you in the past, a hashgacha pratit moment (when you could recognise Hashem's involvement in your life), a way out a current difficulty or something inspirational 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 or a reminder of the fact that Hashem's salvation will come and He will keep his word and save His people.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Ledder

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The pasuk 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, usually 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're'echa kamocho' – loving one's fellow as oneself.

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