

Torah Talk—מאמרי תורה



The Parasha Post of the Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital

Parashat Ki Tavo
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פרשת כי תבוא
כ"א באלול תשע"ו

Torah Reading: *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) 26:1-29:8

In this *parasha*, Moshe instructs the *Bnei Yisrael* (the Israelites) on the first fruit offering and then elaborates on the terms of the covenant by listing the blessings for keeping the commandments and the punishments for disobeying them.

We encounter an interesting verse towards the end of the *parasha* [29:4]: “וְאֹלֶךְ אֶתְכֶם אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה, בְּמִדְבָּר; לֹא-בָלוּ שְׂלִמְתֵיכֶם מֵעֲלֵיכֶם, וְנַעֲלֶךְ לֹא-בִלְתָּה מֵעַל רַגְלֶךָ.” – “I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes did not become old on you, and your shoes did not become old on your foot.”

This verse explains how a nomadic nation of about 1.2 million people procured the clothing they needed during their wilderness trek: the clothes and shoes with which the *Bnei Yisrael* began their journey remained as new upon them, so they did not need to procure new goods. In addition, remember that God provided the people with food in the form of manna. God also provided water through sweetening agents (as in *Shemot* [Exodus] 15), and rocks (as in *Shemot* [Exodus] 17 and *Bemidbar* [Numbers] 20), in addition to the *midrashic* story of Miriam’s well which followed them from location to location.

The *Netziv* [Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Berlin – 19th Century Eastern Europe] remarks on these phenomena in his commentary *Ha’amek Davar*: “God watched over them even in hidden ways. Hashem did not create clothing and shoes the way He created the manna and the well in a miraculous manner. But it was with hidden providence that the clothing and the shoes did not wear out. That is how the people will understand and comprehend that in a time of deep distress there will be strong Divine Providence upon them. And God knows how to have compassion such that bad times become not so bad.”

There seem to be two categories of miracles in the Torah: those that are obvious and those that are subtle. The former category might include such earth-shattering events as the Creation of the World, the splitting of the Reed Sea, and the Revelation at Sinai. Less obvious miracles might include Yaakov procuring the birthright instead of Esav, and the descent of Yaakov's family to Egypt as a result of the selling of Yosef, without which none of subsequent Jewish history would have taken place.

One of the messages of the verse above and of the *Netziv's* understanding of it is that we are constantly surrounded by miracles, even if the overt ones no longer occur. Providence works in subtle ways; coincidences may not be coincidences, but confluences of events that help us in ways that we may not be able to understand at the time. Bad times may be made less bad by seemingly unrelated or inconsequential happenings which may prove to be quite significant over the course of our lifetimes.

Consciously appreciating the circumstances of our lives will allow us to see Divine Providence at work and to develop gratitude for all of the aspects of that life that we experience day in and day out.

Shabbat Shalom.

For Discussion:

- Name some aspects of your life that may be influenced by Divine Providence.
- Define the word "miracle." Have you ever experienced either an overt or a covert miracle?
- State 3 facets of your life for which you are grateful.