

א ביסל תורה!

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י"ט אלול תשפ"ה · כי תבוא

How to Avoid Bringing Curses Upon Oneself

By Joshua Jaffe '29

The rebuke to בני ישראל starts with many terrible events which will happen in their future. Your crops will be destroyed. You will be plagued with illness. Your enemies will rule you. You will be cursed wherever you go. Why, you may ask? "תַּחַת" "אֲשֶׁר לֹא-עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת-ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב מְרֹב כָּל" "Since you did not serve ה' your G-d with happiness and goodness of heart, out of an abundance of everything" (דברים כח:מז). How is not being happy deserve such severe punishments?

Commentaries like the בכור שור explain: Given בני ישראל had an abundance of everything, and they were happy, they had no excuse to not serve Hashem, which is why they are getting punished.

רבינו בחי, on the other hand, says that the reason בני ישראל are getting punished is because of their attitude. They did indeed serve Hashem - but not with happiness. Because they served Hashem - but not with a full level of joy and will - all these punishments will befall you. רבינו בחי goes further and explains that doing a מצוה happily is not just the right way to do a מצוה, happiness during a מצוה is itself a מצוה. This is even brought down in the משנה תורה as a הלכה by the מצוות of - that one should perform them out of

happiness. If one does them just because one has to, without passion - they deserve to get cursed with the rebuke. We see from here a clear lesson that we should keep in mind, when doing any מצוה. If one does a מצוה happily, with passion, and intent to serve the creator, one has done the מצוה properly. If, on the other hand, one does so grudgingly and without thinking, whether out of sadness, fear, or just habit, they become liable to all the curses listed in this week's פרשה. However, let us think back to the בכור שור's explanation. If one has everything that one needs, there is no excuse to not serve Hashem. So let us all serve Hashem so that we may all merit all of the blessings mentioned in this week's פרשה and none of the curses. Only then will משיח come speedily in our days.

מעשר=וידוי?

By Ben Snyder '26

This week's פרשה, תבוא, פרשת כי, contains the declaration that farmers make when they have finished separating מעשר, tithes. The declaration itself is essentially an affirmation that the farmer completed the מצוה in its entirety and in the exact way it was supposed to be done. Interestingly, though, this declaration is referred to as וידוי מעשר, the tithe confession, in מסכת מעשר שני. Why would a declaration that attests to the thoughtful completion of a מצוה be called a וידוי, a word associated with repentance for having done something wrong?

Rav Soloveitchik explains that this declaration being referred to as a וידוי reveals something important about the general process of תשובה, repentance: namely, that תשובה is not simply about listing off one's faults. If it were just about a person going over all of his negatives, then that process might end up making him feel as if he is not capable of becoming a better person, and, thus, his תשובה would not have the desired effect. Rather, the תשובה process is also about taking note of the things we did that were right, in order to show ourselves that we can indeed improve. This is the reason for the name וידוי מעשר: it shows the person that he fulfilled the מצוה in exactly the way that he was supposed to, and that since he is capable of following Hashem's words correctly and exactly, he is likewise capable of listing and regretting his

mistakes in the traditional וידוי and having the fortitude to not repeat them.

As we are in the month of אלול leading up to ראש חודש, we should try to remember to not simply make ourselves feel guilt, but also to inspire ourselves - in the way that וידוי מעשר does - in our journey to becoming better people.



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