

Parshat Bechukotai 5782

Our sedra begins ' *אם בְּהִלְכְּךָ תִּלְכּוּ* , if you will walk in my statutes.....and then proceeds to list the vast rewards which will ensue as a result. The medrash connects this verse to: 'I considered the ways in which I would go but my feet carried me to your statutes,' King David stated, 'Every day I decided to go to a specific place, to one person's home and another person's house. However my feet brought me to your synagogues and study halls'

I would like to discuss just two of the many aspects of this medrash. Rashi says on the word *תִּלְכּוּ* ': shetihyu ameilim (toiling) beTorah. This means that Torah must be our main focus and priority, consistently and constantly, learning and practising. Torah learning and observance should be done with effort and concentration, with inner thought, inner holiness, it should be our energy and life force and not as external peripheral things ; it should connect us to Hashem , with materialism and other worldly concerns taking second place . It should not be kept in a lazy or habitual way dissociated from Hashem.

We should turn to Him for anything we need, no matter how small. Rav Pincus says that we are taught in very disciplined, mechanical ways eg 'you have to daven, sit down, stand up etc', but Torah has to be G-d , not action, oriented . Certainly the formula is essential but sometimes we may lose sight of the connection and forget that Hashem is in our lives and has a relationship with us. To the extent of our own kavanah, Hashem creates blessing and peace throughout the world. Hashem is praying with us. *וְהִבְיָאוּתִים אֶל-הָרַקְדָּשִׁי, וְשִׁמְחָתִים בְּבֵית תְּפִלָּתִי* And when we do a mitzva we should think that we are keeping the word of Hashem , not because logically it seems correct . Relating to Hashem should be soulful, alive, dynamic and passionate, so that He permeates all aspects of our life constantly. We should maintain the perspective that our life goal and mission is to connect to Hashem. This is what the medrash means re Dovid, the mainstay of his day was always his learning and connecting with Hashem.

A second perspective on this medrash is related to this time of sefira where it is incumbent upon us to work on our character traits. But this fine tuning may be a source of conflict. As everyone is unique, generous people may get irritated by the miserly and honest people with those prone to hyperbole etc. So perfecting our

unique traits will surely intensify our differences and cause further schism? Individuality requires the ability to build our world from our unique traits and to be comfortable with ourselves, without needing people around us. We accord honour to others by recognising an area of greatness in them which one personally does not possess. Seeing others in the context of one's own expertise, one can honour others for their own accomplishments. But don't compare others to yourself! Eg if you excel in the attribute of truth, then admire their excellence in the aspect of chess etc,

At the giving of the Torah, the voice emanated from the mountain so that everyone experienced it on their individual level. The medrash states that one voice split into 7 voices which then multiplied into 70 languages. 7 is the largest prime number under 10, it cannot be formed by multiplying any two other numbers, it is the largest number which still manifests as an entity in its own right, seven therefore indicates individuality ; this was multiplied by 10, the number of collectivity, which indicates affiliation of individuals to form a single entity where the whole has a value much greater than the sum of its parts. Our character development must follow the path of 70; the 7 must fuse with the 10, not only must we exert ourselves in the development of our own personal character, we must recognise the qualities of others and give them honour. We must pay homage to the traits of others and build a community of solidarity. Perfection of one's own individuality is achieved only when one seeks the perfection of others . Everyone must align with the community, recognising the qualities of others and using their own gifts, we have to not only excel individually but must unite with the community, in which we must find our own niche. . 70 different voices were heard but they are classified as one group. Rabbi Tatz says that we achieve our uniqueness when we fit into a larger order perfectly. It is only when we blend into the universal picture as we should be in terms of our own uniqueness that we thrill to the realisation that no one else could fulfil this function. The pathway begins personally but crucially the obligation shifts.

King David sought initially to actualise his own potential attempting to go to specific places but he was duty bound to guide the community in place of this yearning for personal perfection, he was bound to merge the 7 with the 10, thus producing 70, a level of perfection that would not have otherwise be achieved.

Sources : Rabbi Leff, Rabbi Miller , Rabbi Pincus, Mrs Shira Smiles, Rabbi Tatz