

Righter Than Rights

"Abbas, you look so happy."

"I am, Avi. I just saw a sign advertising a *machsan* (storage room) for sale. My office in our *machsan* is very crowded. I really need more room."

Avi's father calls the number. Who answers the phone but his next-door neighbor, who owns the *machsan* next to his, in the basement of their building."

"This is too good to be true. I can buy this *machsan*, which is right next to ours, and knock down the wall between them to make one huge room for my office."
"Wonderful, Abba."

The neighbor, who is selling his *machsan*, has mixed emotions.

"I don't know what to do, dear. Our next door neighbor wants to buy the *machsan*. It would surely be good for him. However, someone else wants to buy it. What should we do?"

"And you shall do the straight and the good (thing)" (Devarim 6:18). What is the straight and the good (thing)? Rashi explains that this is referring to compromise and going "before the letter of the law." When there is a dispute between two people, each side should try to compromise, and not insist upon his full rights. The Gemora (Bava Metzia 108a) speaks about a case where a neighbor wants to buy a field adjacent to his own. The seller must give him preference. It is much better to own adjacent fields, than scattered ones. So too, in the case of our *machsan*. It is much more convenient for Avi's father to own two adjacent *machsanim*. Therefore the Rambam (Hilchos Shechanim 12:5) rules that the seller must sell to his neighbor because that sale is "straight and good."

Kinderlach . . .

"It's mine. I have a right to it." That is true. However is it always right to insist on your full rights? Compromise is a wonderful thing. Each side must give in a little. Therefore, sometimes giving up some of your rights is really right. Righter than rights.

Stuck Like Glue

"I'm home, everyone!"

"Abba, Abba welcome home!"

"It's great to see your smiling faces. I missed you all day. I have something special for you."

"What is it, Abba?"

"One of your favorite Shabbos treats."

The Abba pulls out a large plastic bag and hands it to his oldest daughter. She opens it carefully.

"Dried dates! Yum, yum. We love dried dates. They are delicious!"

"Enjoy them kinderlach. Just wash off your hands after you finish. They are very sticky."

"Look, Abba. These dates are really stuck together. Almost as if they were glued."

100



ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם,
המוציא לחם מן הארץ.



ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם,
בורא מיני מזונות.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם,
בורא פרי העץ.



ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם,
בורא פרי האדמה.

"Believe it or not, kinderlach, the Gemora compares these stuck dates to our relationship to Hashem."

"Is that because they are so sweet, Abba?"

"Not as sweet as you, Esti. However, the Gemora has a different idea in mind. It is related to a verse in this week's parasha. 'And you who cleaved to Hashem your G-d are all alive today' (Devarim 4:4)."

"I know that verse, Abba. It is speaking about those who survived the sin of Baal Peor."

"Excellent, Chaim. How did they worship Baal Peor?"

"Anyway they wanted. Anything goes. If it feels good, do it."

"Right. This attracted those who sinned. The verse states, 'And Israel became attached to Baal Peor, and Hashem's anger flared at Israel' (Bamidbar 25:4). The Gemora (Sanhedrin 64a) explains that they were attached to Baal Peor like a

bracelet. The Torah Temima elaborates that a bracelet is not attached very strongly. It has freedom to move around."

"How is this related to the dates, Abba?"

"I'll explain. That very same Gemora describes our 'cleaving to Hashem' like two dates stuck together."

"That is pretty strong connection, Abba."

"Exactly, Esti. The Torah Temima elaborates that our relationship to Hashem is very deep, unlike our attachment to Baal Peor, which is only superficial."

"That is fascinating, Abba."

"The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh relates that Hashem is the Living G-d, the source of all life. Those who cleave to Him attach themselves to this source of life. Therefore, they are alive."

"Does this relate to us, Abba?"

"Yes it does, kinderlach."

One of our Torah leaders stresses that cleaving to Hashem is our primary task nowadays. There are so many distractions in our world. They can occupy our minds 24 hours a day so we won't even have a thought about Hashem. But they are all powerless to better the world. Just a little thought will show this to be true. Our job is to filter out the distractions and attach ourselves to Hashem."

Kinderlach . . .

There are many ways to cleave to Hashem. The Baal HaTurim finds a hint to one in the verse. The letter "kuf" has the gematria (numerical value) of 100. It appears in the word "devakim" with a note over it. This is a hint to the 100 blessings that we should make every day. This a halacha in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 46:3. Kinderlach, let us all make 100 berachos our project this week. To attach ourselves to The Source of all life.

Parasha Questions:

- Who cannot work on Shabbos? (5:14)
- What will happen when we honor our parents? (5:16)
- What is the difference between one who serves out of love and out of fear? (Rashi 6:5)
- Why did Hashem choose us to be His holy nation? (7:6-8)
- Is the reward greater for serving Hashem from love or fear? (Rashi 7:9)