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Shelach — Shabbat M'vorchim

26 Sivan, 5776

Graduation

Caps and gowns, diplomas, speeches. Get past the ceremony and what is most associated with graduation? For many it is the thought of summer vacation or having graduated, i.e., being finished with school altogether.

And yet, the graduation ceremony - usually replete with cap and gowns, diplomas, speeches and celebrations - is called "commencement" synonymous with beginning, start, opening, outset, onset, launch, initiation, inception.

Graduation, then, connotes that one is beginning a different level of education or a new aspect of life.

In Judaism, the perfect example that the end is tied up with a new beginning is shown by the fact that immediately upon finishing reading the Torah on Simchat Torah, we commence, once again, to read it from the beginning. This teaches us, among other things, that there is always more Torah one can learn.

Many of us put Jewish education for our children at the end of a long list of extra-curricular activities that includes swimming lessons, little league practice, studying a foreign language, a musical instrument, play-dates and more. By the time a young person is dating and begins bringing home non-Jewish boyfriends and girlfriends, we realize that we should have been a little more serious about giving them a Jewish education sooner.

When is the appropriate time to "commence" a child's Jewish education? Before the child is even born! Today, we know that good nutrition, exercise and abstinence from chemical substances can have a positive affect on the unborn child. Studies even show that the mother's mood or mental state can have a bearing on the child's later development.

From earliest times, there have been examples in Jewish history of mothers taking their unborn child's spiritual health very seriously. The mothers of many of our greatest sages stationed themselves near yeshivas so their unborn children would be able to hear Torah being studied, or they studied Torah themselves especially diligently during pregnancy.

Once a Jewish child is born, his senses can be stimulated Jewishly. Music, mobiles, books, blocks, even videos are available in a Jewish genre. Just as quickly as a two-year-old can memorize a nursery rhyme, she can learn the Shema prayer; and the newly developing spark of Jewishness will continue to grow and expand.

By fostering a Jewish environment in the home, and sending the child to a school where he will be enthused with a true-Jewish spirit, the spark can be fanned into a flame of Jewish pride, age-old tradition, and lifelong values.

But don't despair: One of the most magnificent concepts in Judaism is that it is never too late. Truly, we never graduate from Judaism; each new beginning is indeed, a brand new beginning.

(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

The Gap Between the Roof and the Leg of the Letter 'Hey'

There is an incident recorded in this week's parsha known as the story of the "Ma'Apilim". After the sin of the Spies in which the people cried that they did not want to enter Eretz Yisrael, Moshe Rabbeinu related to the people the decree of the Almighty that they would need to stay in the Wilderness for the next 40 years and the generation would die there without ever entering the Land of Israel. The people mourned exceedingly when they heard this decree.

Immediately thereafter the pasukim say: "They awoke early in the morning and ascended toward the mountaintop saying 'We are ready, and we shall go ascend to the place of which Hashem has spoken, for we have sinned!'" Moshe immediately chastised them for this action: "Why is it that you transgress the word of Hashem? It will not succeed. (V'Hi Lo Tizlach) Do not ascend, for Hashem is not in your midst! And do not be smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekite and the Canaanite are there before you, and you will fall by the sword, inasmuch as you have turned away from Hashem, and Hashem will not be with you." Predictably, "They were intransigent to ascend to the mountaintop, while the Aron [Ark] of Hashem's covenant and Moshe did not move from the midst of the camp. The Amalekite and the Canaanite who dwelled on that mountain descended; they struck them and pounded them until annihilation. [Bamidbar 14:40-45]

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The question is – why did this not constitute doing Teshuva on their part? Superficially, this had all the components required of true repentance. Teshuva requires regret for the past and a determination to mend their ways in the future. That is what happened here. They felt bad for the past that they disobeyed the Almighty. Now they wanted to enter Eretz Yisrael and they resolved to make that happen in the immediate future. Why was Moshe Rabbeinu so adamant that their actions would not be successful? How could he be so sure that they were not manifesting a bona-fide Teshuva that the Almighty would accept?

Rav Wolbe writes in one of his essays that they were lacking a third required component of repentance. Yes, Teshuva requires regret for the past and acceptance of change for the future. However, the main thing a person must do is to try to figure out what he did wrong the first time and how to change his ways to avoid repetition of past mistakes. Merely repeating the same mistakes repeatedly is not really Teshuvah.

Teshuva requires an examination of what I did wrong, of figuring out “Why is the Master of the World not happy with me?” The main component of Teshuva is change – doing it differently than previously. The sin committed here (with the report of the Spies and the people’s reaction to it) was the fact that they did not listen to the Ribono shel Olam. The Ramban writes that the sin was that after having seen the miracles in Egypt and the splitting of the Red Sea, it was about time for the people to put their faith in G-d. If the Almighty told them to go to Eretz Yisrael, they should have believed Him. They failed to bend their will to the Will of the Creator. This is primarily what a Jew is about: “We will listen and we will do” [Shmos 24:7].

However, in this case, they continued doing exactly the same thing. Once again, they transgressed the Will of the Creator. The Will of the Creator now was “stay where you are”. Saying, “We are going into Eretz Yisrael” is exactly a repetition of their previous sin. This Teshuva does not indicate a change.

Rav Wolbe provides a beautiful insight into the Gemara [Menachos 29b], which asks “Why was This World created with the letter Hey? (The Talmud mentions that Olam HaZeh was created with a Hey and Olam Habah – the World to Come – was created with the letter Yud). The Gemara answers: “It is because this world is like a vestibule – anyone who wants to leave can leave.” There is no “bottom” to the letter Hey. If one wants to leave, there is a wide-open “door” from which to make one’s exit.

The Gemara then asks why there is a space between the leg of the Hey and the roof of the Hey. The Gemara answers “If a person repents and wants to re-enter, there is a little opening for him to climb back in.” The Gemara then asks why there is a need for the “little opening” – why can’t the repentant person come back through the bottom opening, the same way he left? The Gemara answers, “He will not be successful doing that.” I have never fully understood this passage of the Talmud.

Rav Wolbe explains that the words “He will not be successful” are exactly the words of Moshe to the Ma’Apilim: “V’Hi Lo Tizlach”. You cannot just repeat exactly what you have been doing until now and expect to achieve repentance. That will not succeed! Repentance means changing one’s approach, not merely retracing one’s same steps all over again. Teshuva requires coming in afresh, from a new vantage point and a new perspective.

As Rav Hutner used to say, “Teshuva is not just becoming better; Teshuva is becoming different.”

(by Rabbi Yissocher Frand from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Davening and Shiurim Schedule	
<p>Friday, 7/1 — 25 Sivan Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 7:00 p.m.</p> <p>Shabbat, 7/2 — 26 Sivan Shacharit — 9:00 a.m. Sof Z’man Kriat Shema — 9:25 a.m. Berachot Gemora Shiur — cancelled this week Minchah & Seudah Shilishit — 8:05 p.m. Ma’ariv — 9:22 p.m.</p> <p>Sunday, 7/3 — 27 Sivan Shacharit — 8:00 a.m. Shulchan Aruch Shiur — 8:45 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 8:20 p.m.</p> <p>Monday, 7/4 — 28 Sivan Shacharit — 8:00 a.m. Breakfast and Shiur by Rabbi Levi Kaplan — 8:45 a.m. Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 8:45 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 8:20 p.m.</p>	<p>Tuesday, 7/5 — 29 Sivan Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 8:20 p.m.</p> <p>Wednesday – Rosh Chodesh Tamuz, 7/6 — 30 Sivan Shacharit — 6:40 a.m. Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 8:20 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday – Rosh Chodesh Tamuz, 7/7 — 1 Tamuz Shacharit — 6:40 a.m. Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 8:20 p.m. Tanya Shiur — 9:00 p.m.</p> <p>Friday, 7/8 — 2 Tamuz Shacharit — 7:00 a.m. Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m. Candles — 8:17 p.m. Minchah / Ma’ariv — 7:00 p.m.</p>