



Kee Tavo

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Several of the *parashiyot* in the book of *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) combine into one long transition from the wanderings in the wilderness to settling in the Land of Israel. In some chapters we read about ceremonies upon entering the Land; in other places we read warnings about following God's laws once in the Land.

In *Parashat Va-etchanan* Moshe gives the people a “pep talk” about staying true to Tradition.

בְּקִי הִשְׁמַר לָךְ הַשְׁמֹרָה לְךָ הַשְׁמֹרָה מְאֹד בְּרוּחַתְּשֵׁיחַ אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר־רָאִי עֵינַיִךָ
וּפְרָשְׁתָּהֶם מִלְּבָבְךָ כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ וְהוֹדֵעְתָם לְבָנֶיךָ וּלְבְנֵי בְנֵי־ךָ

“Take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live. And make them known to your children and to your children’s children.” (Deut 4:9)

There are three separate instructions in this verse:

1. Don't forget your experiences in the wilderness
2. Don't let the feelings and commitment which came from these experiences fade.
3. Share your experiences with the next two generations.

There is an emphasis here on experience. What the Jews saw and heard and felt during the previous 40 years was amazing. No one who lived through those decades in the wilderness would ever forget God's displays of power and His love for the Jewish People. But as the writer Flannery O'Connor wrote: “Knowing who you are is good for one generation only.” If you don't instill the same ideas and feelings in the next generation everything stops with you.

In fact, the 3rd part of the verse I quoted earlier says וְהוֹדֵעְתָם לְבָנֶיךָ וּלְבְנֵי בְנֵי־ךָ “make them known to your children and to your children’s children.” All of us who work in the school (teachers, staff), or on behalf of the school (board, donors, volunteers), must see our role as more than meetings *today's* challenges. We must do our best to secure the future educational opportunities for at least two generation of Jewish children.

How does one pass along Judaism in a way that will last for two generations? We need to go beyond the simple recitation of facts or ideas; we need to instill in children the sense that they are part of something larger. We need to help them develop a connection to God and the sense of belonging to a people. As Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote: "Israel is not a people of definers, but a people of witnesses." We who work in day schools take that responsibility very seriously. We see ourselves as more than simply funnels for transmitting information; we pass along *who we are*.

Continuing with this theme of extending our work beyond the current generation, we will soon read in *Parashat Nitzavim*, the *parasha* read before *Rosh HaShana*, that God tells the people אַתֶּם וְצָבִים הַיּוֹם בְּלִפְנֵי "You stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God... to enter into the covenant of the Lord your God." The *Midrash Tanhuma* says that every single Jew, including those not yet born, were standing there, committing themselves to the covenant with God. This is another example of seeing one's actions as transcending the current generation.

What we try to do at Schechter is shape leaders for today and tomorrow, so there will be a strong Jewish community for generations to come.

On behalf of the faculty, let me say: *Anachnu nitzavim Ha'yom* - we are here today, proud of our colleagues, proud of our students and graduates, and very optimistic about the profound impact they will have on the next two generations of Jews. Welcome to another great year at Schechter!

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION [KI TAVO](#), ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

1. What does Moses ask Israel to set up when they cross the Jordan and? What do they write on these items?
2. Moses tells the twelve tribes to go and stand on top of two mountains after they enter into the land. What are they supposed to do when they are on top of the mountain?
3. What are the blessings that God promises Israel if they keep the mitzvot?
4. What are the curses that God promises Israel if they do not keep the mitzvot?
5. Are there more curses or blessings? Why do you think that this is the case?
6. Which of the curses do you think is the worst one? Explain.