

Menachem Persoff

The Correct "Root" to Redemption

Yiddish has a well-known phrase: SHVER TSU ZAYN A YID, meaning it's tough being a Jew. Indeed, it is. We are supposed to be partners in fixing a broken world, and our responsibilities weigh heavily on us. But, just as a robust tree must have strong roots, so we, God's chosen artisans, must firmly be loyal to the oath undertaken in this week's Parsha to succeed in our mission.

However, our Parsha raises the notion that some persons (even whole tribes) might not possess the motivating spirit to uphold the Covenant with Hashem, not in the biblical era or any future period.

Indeed, one whose heart turns away is compared with a root that bears gall and wormwood, akin to the weakening of one's disposition with time. However, such individuals "go in peace" even though they walk in the stubbornness of their hearts (D'varim 29: 17-20).

These self-satisfied individuals conjecture that they are immune from punishment, arguing that the merits of the righteous will protect them. Or they protest that they repudiated the

Torah and never accepted the oath and are thus immune from curses essentially designated to the righteous who leave the path.

Of course, some interpret the Torah according to their mores, desires, and fashionable (even worthy) notions. They are content to observe commandments that suit them not necessarily consonant with Torah teachings.

These individuals rationalize that their interpretations of the Torah are noble and progressive. So, no wonder the Parsha tells us that the oath applied to everyone from the elite to the woodcutters, independent of personal views, current ideologies, or contemporary interpretations of Tikkun Olam. Everyone is bound by the covenant.

The Torah is our guidebook. Moreover, our loyalty to Hashem and His Torah is not a matter for the negotiating table, as hard as it is "to be Jewish". In the sporting world, we learn of "No pain, no gain." So it is with us Jews: We appreciate that Hashem did not make the task easy. However, by facing the challenges, we grow and gradually learn that Hashem runs the world and that we are partners in bringing about the final Geula.

As Rosh HaShana approaches, we

might internalize that our every action, however small, can lead us - and the entire world - to a totally new condition whereby all of Hashem's creations give Him homage. V'CHEIN Y'HI RATZON. **MP**