

Weekly Teaching

August 4, 2017

The Hebrew term for Jewish Law is *Halacha*.

Observing the etymology we can define *Halacha* meaning “a way of life” or “the way we do things.”

Halacha teaches that we always observe Tisha B’Av before the weekly Torah reading of *Parashat Va’etchanan*.

The fixing of the Torah reading in this way also results in always reading *Parashat Devarim* before Tisha B’Av.

Parashat Devarim, the first Torah portion of the Book of Deuteronomy, begins with a short introduction to Moses’ words of warning spoken in various places during his last days.

Moses reviews some of the important events of the desert wanderings, beginning with the departure from Mt. Sinai, with an early emphasis on the incident of the spies that resulted in the Israelites extension of wilderness wanderings for forty years.

It was the sin of the spies incident which tradition teaches took place on Tisha B’Av; the first of many terrible tragedies that befell the Jewish people on the 9th day of the Hebrew month of Av.

Parashat Devarim is intended as a rebuke of our collective sins, and a reminder of God’s subsequent punishment of our sins.

But, now with Tisha B’Av having already been observed, *Parashat Va’etchanan* comes to us a source of Divine comfort and consolation.

The lesson of Jewish law is that no matter the tragic circumstances that have occurred, our collective responsibility is to go forward and become even stronger than before.

Jews look upon the leftover remnants that come with destruction and immediately ask how can we rebuild?

Parashat Va’etchanan asks the question: What will happen if the Jewish people abandon God?

Then, the negative consequences are pushed aside by the power that comes with our ability to repent.

We are overtly told that if we seek God then we will find God.

So, with *Parashat Va’etchanan* we are told how to seek God and subsequently become more committed in our daily faithful sacred living.

We are then overtly told that if we should succeed in truly following God’s Commandments, then we will receive the Divine Rewards we desire.

It is also not an accident that *Parashat Va’etchanan* begins our seven week journey to the High Holidays.

We look at what has occurred and determine what we need to re-build even stronger than before.

It begins with the acceptance to love God with all of our heart, mind and soul; to really try and observe faithfully God’s Commandments.

Halacha is our “a way of life;” “the way we do things.”

God pulled us over this past week and issued us a “warning ticket.”

We are summoned to appear before the Holy Court in 7 weeks time; plenty of time to prepare our case for leniency with a promise to greatly improve moving forward.

Shabbat Shalom,

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