

It Takes Two. Or Three, or Four...

When she was First Lady, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton promoted the concept that “it takes a village” when it comes to caring for the needs of children. After the terrible tragedy this summer in Houston with the Berry family, we have seen that a village of supporters can come together to help out in the greatest time of tragedy. On a day to day basis, it also takes a village to keep a society working smoothly. Each of us has our own strengths and weaknesses; we strive to find partnerships that complement one another and offer peaceful co-existence, relying on one another to complete our lives. For instance, I can offer spiritual guidance as a rabbi, but when it comes to numbers, I’m lost. For my CPA, numbers might be second nature, while religion might seem foreign and complicated.

As the *Torah* inches towards the end of our yearly cycle, we find the Israelites preparing to enter the promised land; learning about what they’re supposed to do now that their once migrant society is settled. The *Torah* makes no secret that each person has their own purpose, the priests to bless and offer sacrifices, the Levites to help the priests, the Israelites to farm the land so the community can eat. Each of these elements works together to create a society that functions.

Parshat Ki Tavo teaches us about rebuking one another when one has wronged someone, about bringing the gifts of our labors as an offering to God, and about the consequences of obedience and disobedience. These consequences are actually framed as blessings and curses. The text teaches that if one were to follow all of God’s laws, blessings would come to them. As we teach our children, when you eat your vegetables, you can have ice cream for dessert. Or, the reward for a dog who is finally house trained is a treat (a treat for the dog, and certainly a *treat* for the owner). But the same child learns there will be time out when she doesn’t follow directions, and our text also teaches of the consequences, the curses that befall a nation who disobeys God’s laws.

What strikes me in this *parshah* is the fact that the text recognizes that we all have something to teach or share with our community. In chapter 27, verse 26 the text teaches: “Cursed be he who will not uphold the terms of this Teaching and observe them. And all the people shall say, Amen.” Observing and learning *Torah* is an obligation on every Jew. But, the commentators recognize that not everyone will be cut out for sitting and learning all day, so they remind us in the *Talmud Yerushalmi* that this applies even to those individuals who never studied and never taught Torah, but can give financial support to those who do. The *Torah* tells us that it is a curse, a negative, when we don’t share our gifts with the community. When we withhold our gifts - educational, financial and otherwise - we take away a piece of the community, a piece of God’s *Torah* that we are commanded to share.

It takes a village. We must share our gifts with one another in order to create and sustain that village. Whether you can give financially, or offer services, if you can design the T-shirt for *Zimriyah*, or help build a *sukkah*, or even just greet with a smiling face, each and every member of our Levine Academy community, our Dallas community and our Jewish community is an integral part of making our village work. What will you share?

ללמוד **To Learn:** ללמד **To Teach:** Find someone to teach you something new, and offer to share your wisdom with them. Creating a partnership in learning, a *chevruta*, is the essence of Jewish study.

לשמור **To Keep** לעשות **To Do:** When you celebrate Shabbat and other holidays with your close or extended family, do certain people always have certain roles? How does the family work together to get everything done?