



# SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

**KI TAVO / כי תבוא**

**IT'S HAPPENING TODAY!**

**DISTRIBUTION DATE:**

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**PARSHA:**

**KI TAVO / כי תבוא**

**SERMON TITLE:**

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In loving memory of

ר' מנחם זאב בן פנחס ז"ל אה  
Emil W. Herman אה  
who loved and supported Torah learning.



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We Jews find ourselves in a perplexing situation, especially in Israel. You see, even now, sixty years after the end of the holocaust and the creation of Israel nothing about our situation makes sense.

For example, after the holocaust, when the UN held a vote whether to allow the Jewish people their own land, one might have thought that European countries whose soil had become the graves of millions of Jews, would have been the first to support the motion. Even if for no other reason than to apologize for the terror they had subjected their Jewish citizens to. They didn't then and they don't today and that is perplexing.

Another example is that after sixty years one would think that Israel's existence would be secure, a sure thing. It isn't. Surprisingly and sadly, the question 'will Israel survive this new century' is real and it is daunting. This too is perplexing.

Luckily, our Parsha sheds some light on the matter.

Obadiah the Convert of Bagdad wrote a letter to Maimonides in which he asks for whether he is allowed to say things like, "My G-d and G-d of my fathers", "He who performed miracles for my ancestors", "He who took us out of Egypt" and "He who chose us from among the nations" in his prayers. As a convert, Obadiah's ancestors did not experience the Exodus from Egypt, nor were they present at Mt. Sinai when

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G-d chose His people, nor were they beneficiaries of the miracles G-d performed for the Maccabees.

In truth this is a very old question. Our Parsha discusses the mitzvah of *Bikurim*. In short *Bikurim* means bringing the first ripe fruit of each harvest to Jerusalem to be given to the Kohen as a gift to G-d. Upon arriving in Jerusalem a prayer beginning with the words, is recited, "When I arrive in the land that G-d had promised our forefathers to give to us." Again the question is can a convert say "my forefathers" in prayer? Initially the Mishnah answers, no. Converts were not to recite this prayer when they brought their *bikurim*.

Rabbi Meir, a descendant of a convert to Judaism, Caesar Nero, explains that it is dishonest for a convert to say "our forefathers" and when talking to G-d one must remain completely honest. Instead the convert should say, "The G-d of Israel's forefathers."

This ruling however, presents a problem. If one were to be completely honest in prayer how can we, Jews from birth say things like, "When I arrive in The Land..." We weren't even a thought when the people arrived in The Land. Isn't that 'less than' truthful?

The answer also comes from our Parsha. When Moses speaks to the Jewish people just days before he died he says, "Today you have become a nation." Then later Moses says "On this day G-d commanded you to do these mitzvos." How can Moses say these thing forty years after the revelation at Sinai.

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Rashi explains that we must feel as though the mitzvos and G-d's covenant with us is brand new, like it happened today. This is where the saying, "Every Jew must feel as though he personally left Egypt" comes from.

The same applies to every part of our history. As Jews we must feel as though everything that happened to our nation throughout its history has just now happened in our lives. We each left Egypt, we each stood at the foot of Mt. Sinai and heard G-d announce the Ten Commandments and we each entered the Promised Land.

Why is this important?

This feeling keeps our nation alive.

Take a business for example. The entrepreneur will constantly work hard on his new business for he remembers when he didn't have the business and he knows that one day his business could disappear.

His son will be a little less careful because he was brought into the business automatically. Still, he remembers his father's dedication so he'll do his share and the business will be all right.

But the grandson was born into the business. He can't even imagine the world without it. He will bring it down. As a general rule, the third generation will destroy the business.



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This is why we must feel as though we experienced everything ourselves. If we feel that today we personally left Egypt we will always guard our freedom and never take it for granted. If we feel that today G-d gave us the torah at Mt. Sinai Torah will be precious to us and we'll learn it and teach it to others.

We must also feel that on this very day we have entered our Promised Land and that just as we were sent away before we could be sent away again. Therefore we must always protect our brand new home with the energy and vigor of an entrepreneur.

Our Jewish history isn't just the story of a people thousands of years ago. Our history repeats itself in our own lives every day. Therefore Halacha says that even a convert can thank G-d for taking him personally out of Egypt for today he is an inseparable part of the Jewish people. Today he too leaves Egypt. Today he too receives the Torah at Mt. Sinai. Today he enters the Promised Land with all of us. We are equal, for we all experience these same events every day!

One last thing:

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi had the opportunity to ask Moshiach when he would be coming to take us out of exile. Moshiach answered, "Today". The Rebbe explained that if Jews would feel every day that "Moshiach is coming today" our level of anticipation of his arrival would be of completely new dimensions. Also, our daily behavior would be different, perhaps more "*Moshiach-dik*".

Jews! Moshiach is coming today!!

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