

Ki Tetse – 5782

Every day, from the first day of the month of Ellul, until after Sukkot, the rabbis included a recitation of Psalm 27 in addition to the psalm for the day that was recited on the temple mount by the Levi'im. It is called a Psalm of Repentance but just why is that so and why is it so important that it is said every single day? Let's begin by listening to the words of David, King of Israel. It is found on page.....

What do we know about King David? We know that he was the son of Jesse and that he was recruited to slay the giant Goliath. We are told that he was a man of war. He was a sweet singer, playing the lyre in such a way that when King Saul was troubled and that was often, David was called into his tent to sooth the king and help him sleep. We know that David and Jonathan, Saul's son were best friends and loved one another as if they were brothers. We know that Saul felt threatened by David, acknowledging that he was a legitimate threat to Saul's reign as king because of David's reputation for bravery and leadership. We know that Saul and Jonathan went to war again against the Philistines and this time Jonathan was killed in battle and Saul could never forgive David for how he was alive, and Jonathan was dead. Through an act of trickery, David proved that he was not at fault and so Saul appointed David as his successor to the kingship. David's reign was brutal and marked by both fighting without and fighting within. To add to his misery, he fell in love with another man's wife, Bathsheba and committed adultery with her. That union led to the birth of Solomon and David's first-born son fought Solomon for the throne and David had to put down a rebellion within his camp and in his own tent. Remember it was Solomon

who build the first temple in Jerusalem because his father, David, had too much blood on his hands.

But now, we just read that at the end of his life, all David wanted was to sit in the temple and bask in the love of HaShem. He begs for forgiveness and finds contrition in his love of HaShem and his devotion to his faith in HaShem. While King Saul was wracked by insecurity and lack of faith in himself and his abilities, King David sought refuge in his faith. Tradition attributes the writing of many of the psalms which we read for instance at a funeral, to the quill of King David. He wrote in Psalm 24, the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. In Psalm 27 which we just read, the Lord is my light and my help. Whom shall I fear. And in Psalm 29, Acclaim the Lord Almighty. Praise him for his power and his glory. And again, back to Psalm 27. Hide not from me. Reject not your servant.

Just today, as I was preparing to write this week's Davar Torah, Fanny and I revisited yet again preparations for the High Holy Days, and she asked me about the taking out of all the Torah scrolls and holding them while everyone stands for the singing of Kol Nidre. It has always been that way, all the years that I was Gabbai and before that when Leon Possen, May His Memory Be a Blessing, was gabbai. Fanny quite rightly questioned that tradition because, considering alterations to in-house services because of the pandemic, that's a lot of people crowded on the bimah, never mind the fact that there are fewer and fewer of us who can actually bear that weight while standing through the prayer. So, I went in search of a solution and found it my old copy of A Guide to Jewish Religious Practice by Rabbi Israel Klein.

And what did I discover. Traditionally, only two Torah Scrolls were taken out and one was held on the left of the Shaliach Tzibbur and the other

on the right. They became the witnesses of the confessions of the people and traditionally, such events always required three men of good faith and devotion. Three witnesses to oversee a Conversion, or a confession or a sit in judgement of others. What stands on the bimah on Yom Kippur eve, during Kol Nidre is a holy Beit Din, sitting in judgement of the members of the congregation mirroring the divine judgements we ask to make in our favour. We ask to be forgiven of our sins just like David did 2500 years ago. We ask the holy one, blessed be he, to witness our contrition and provide us salvation for our sins. But we must be as contrite as David, realizing the enormity of our sins but vowing to make amends and do better. Only then can we hope to find the shelter that King David sought at the end of his life.

Too often we stand while the Shaliach Tzibbur reads the psalm and the words, and their beauty fly over us. We've read the psalm aloud in English, but I want to finish with the reading in Hebrew because, it is not just beautiful poetry but expresses our thoughts and hopes and prayers for a sweet and happy new year for sure but an inscription in the book of life for health as well. Listen and follow along in the Hebrew.

Call on Sonya or Naomi to read the Hebrew aloud with the Mic.

Shabbat Shalom.