

## Parshas Ki Savo

This week, Parsha- Ki Savo, Rambam explains on Posuk 2 that giving from oneself must be the choicest. That means when you give clothes to the poor, it must be finer than your clothes, or when you build a shul, it should be nicer than your own home. While the Parsha has negative (curses in it), the introduction to the Parsha states that Hashem and the Jews are inseparable, and without Hashem's love, we would not be able to inherit the Land of Israel. In Posuk five, we are told that it is possible to find excuses and blame our circumstances on the outside forces, which can be entirely accurate. Therefore, explains the Torah, the Jewish circumstance that is Hashem puts us in the exact place we need to be. This aligns then with the Rambam's shittah on giving of the choicest. Because if you've been provided the means to give, and you give for the Mitzvah, then it stands to reason that what is given is the choicest. This additionally connects with being counterintuitive. If I worked hard for my means, why should I give the choicest? Don't (after all) I deserve to keep it? The answer connects with the next narrative in the parsha recounting how "Arami" – i.e., Lavan was antagonistic to Yaakov and antithetical to what a Jew ought to be. Lavan was willing to change the deal on Yaakov, backtrack, and try to alter the course of Jewish History. Lavan seemed reasonable (after all, he gave Yaakov room board, a job, and wives), but he was a trickster, and out of his self-interest and narcissistic ideas, he tried to deceive Yaakov. Rambam is teaching us that as Jews, there is a striving for greater goodness, which means in our faith, when we have the opportunity to help another, not only do we

do it, but we give them the best. It is so counterintuitive it is what makes the Jewish people special.

Not all of us can say we succeed at this, but it begins with small steps. That is, even when we don't want to give, we try to; even when we don't want to help, we give of ourselves to try and help. Similarly, in our common communal spaces, we try to make them beautiful, which starts by putting Chumashim away or picking up trash if we see it.

We learn from this introduction to the Parsha that we have moral guidance in the Torah that is different from the world around us. If we tap into that and harness our actions in the Torah way, we can help bring Mashiach sooner.

Good Shabbos