



Parshat Ki Tavo, August 27, 2021

The Week in Review

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We have had an incredibly inspirational first week out of bidud! On Sunday evening, we were introduced to the full Midreshet Lindenbaum, our home for the next year. We received our Makom in the Beit Midrash, where we will spend many hours learning and further developing our Jewish identities. On Monday morning, we visited the Kotel for an early shacharit and then had our first Gemara shiur with our Ramim. The experience of sitting in the Beit Midrash with brilliant teachers and passionate chavrutas created an inviting atmosphere, where we all know that we can contribute new ideas and new perspectives on our formative texts. We also enjoyed our first Women and Halacha class, which will open our mind to modern issues regarding women, and to what extent women are encouraged to be involved in different Jewish practices. The first topic we covered was why it is so integral to the future of Judaism, that we, women, learn and internalize the lessons in the Gemara. In the afternoon, we explored the Hadar mall, where we bought groceries and filled up our Rav Kav cards! We have had immense free time to explore the beautiful city of Jerusalem around us. Tuesday morning, we had a full schedule of classes, where we continued to learn Gemara, and had our first sicha klalit.

That night, we had a fabulous barbeque at Rabbanit Nomi's house in Efrat. We learned about the history of Gush Etzion, and we were truly able to bond as a midrasha, overlooking the stunning vista of the Jerusalem hills. Wednesday, we truly started our routine after engaging in a full day of classes. I am so excited to continue learning and exploring various topics throughout the year. In the evening, we had our first Seder Erev, where we continued our Hilchot Teshuva packets in preparation for the Yamim Noraim. On Thursday, we had an extraordinary tiyul to Nachal Prat. We hiked to the stream, and were able to cool off in the water. We had an amazing time together with Rav Brofsky, Merav, and the Madrichot while learning about the importance of the desert. In the afternoon, we were introduced to Pantry Packers, a chesed opportunity that we will continue to work closely with. We packed over 300 boxes of food for needy families that will be delivered to them in time for Rosh Hashanah. Then we had a wonderful Mishmar with Rav Leibtag, and were able to get in the right mood for shabbat and slichot on motzei shabbat. I am looking forward to coming back together as a Midrasha for slichot, and for another week of learning opportunities, and fun experiences.



First day in the Beit Midrash!



First Visit to the Kotel!



Volunteering at Ezrat Avot



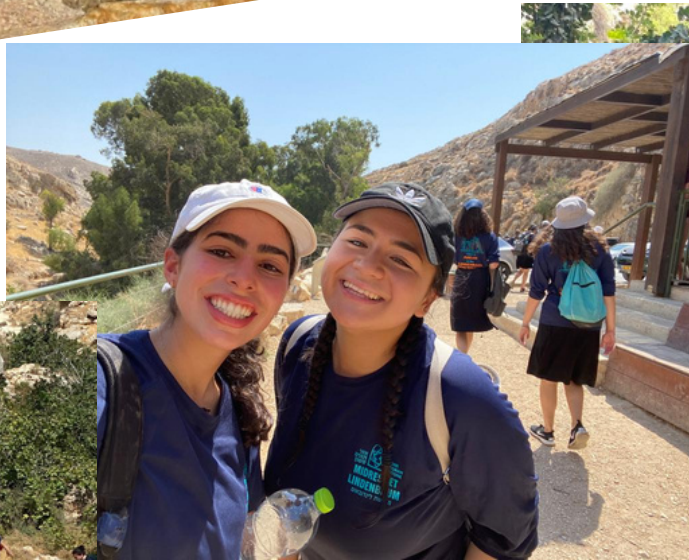


BBQ at Rabbanit
Nomi's house
in Efrat



Tiyul to Nachal Prat!





Pantry Packers!





D'var Torah from our Students

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In Parshat Ki Tavo, Jewish farmers are commanded to bring the first of their fruits, bikkurim, to the Kohen and make a declaration which begins by briefly recounting the story of the Jewish people, from Lavan and Yaakov to the Jews' arrival in Eretz Yisrael. Why tell this story? What is its purpose?

The Or Hachaim picks up on the words which introduce this declaration: וענית ואמרת, which means, "You should answer and say." The Or Hachaim suggests that וענית instead comes from the root of עני, poor. The farmer is humbling himself before Hashem, recounting the lowly beginnings of the Jewish people - Yaakov working as a shepherd for Lavan, at his mercy - in order to remind himself that he truly owes everything, from his harvest to his very existence, to Hashem. This is relevant as we approach Rosh Hashana, when we stand before Hashem and acknowledge that He has the power to decide our fates in the coming year. It is also linked to the theme of blessings and curses which appear later in Parshat Ki Tavo. Though Hashem is about to judge us, it is our own decisions that have determined the people we are becoming,

and this time of year is a great time to take stock and be honest with ourselves.

However, introspection and realization of our own flaws does not prevent us from experiencing the overwhelming gratitude and joy the farmer feels as he begins to reap a bountiful harvest. We've accomplished amazing things and received many blessings from Hashem, even in a year that has been a struggle for us.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks views the bikkurim declaration as a commandment to become "a nation of storytellers." Once the Jewish people have entered Eretz Yisrael and settled there, they must come before the Kohen and relate the tale of how they got there. This is significant because it shows the way the Jewish people recognize Hashem's hand in every aspect of our history and lives, and it also shows the communal nature of the Jewish people. "By making the Israelites a nation of storytellers, Moses helped turn them into a people bound by collective responsibility – to one another, to the past and future, and to God," Rabbi Sacks writes. "By framing a narrative that successive generations would make their own and teach to their children, Moses turned Jews into a nation of leaders." While bringing bikkurim isn't relevant to us right now, this is an important part of our national story that reminds us of who we are, what we value, and who we strive to become, both individually and collectively.



Shabbat Shalom!

