

# GATHER THE PEOPLE

Torah-Based Community Organizing and Development

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## FAMILY SIDTUR STUDY: LESSON PLAN 5

**THIS TIME WE'RE GOING TO TALK ABOUT ANOTHER ONE OF THE PSALMS IN THE שַׁבָּת קִבְּלָתָּ שַׁבָּת SERVICE AND ALSO ABOUT A VERY SPECIAL SONG THAT WE SING TO WELCOME THE שַׁבָּת.**

- The Psalm is number 29, on page 20 in the Siddur.
- And the song is L'cha Dodi, which we'll get to in a couple of minutes.

**SOMEONE PLEASE READ FOR US IN *HEBREW* THE FIRST LINE OF PSALM 29 ON PAGE 20.**

- It says that we should הִבֵּנוּ לַיהוָה, which is repeated three times—so it must be very important!
- *What does הִבֵּנוּ mean?*
- *What does the English say?*
- It translates הִבֵּנוּ as “acclaim”—which means to applaud or shout our approval.
- But like almost all Hebrew words, this word is based on three letters that tell us what it basically means—which is called the root or שׁוֹרֵשׁ.
- The root or שׁוֹרֵשׁ of הִבֵּנוּ are the letters ה-ב-ה—which mean to give or provide.
- So a better English word for הִבֵּנוּ might be “to render”—which means “to give.”
- *The first line of this psalm then is telling us to give God something, but what would that be—what are we supposed to give God?*
- It would be our *obedience*—that is, we would do what God's Torah teaches us to do—all the time.
- In other words, even though we can always choose to do whatever we want—like gossip about people or steal things from them—we can also choose to do what God asks of us.
- *If we were to always do what God wants us to do, all the time, what kinds of things might we do differently? Would we have to choose a different hobby or job?*

**BUT WHAT ABOUT THE THIRD AND FOURTH WORDS OF HEBREW IN THE FIRST LINE?**

- *What do the words בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים mean?*
  1. Our בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים translates them as “exalted creatures.”
  2. A better translation would be, “children of the powerful.”
- *But what do those words mean? Are we all children of the powerful, even those of us who are adults?*
- It tells us that we have come from people—our ancestors: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah—who were very powerful in some way.
- *In what way do you think they might be considered powerful?*

- The way they lived, doing good and avoiding doing bad according to God’s will, made the world a much better place for people then and for everyone who came after them.

#### **AND WHY DO YOU THINK THEY DID WHAT GOD WANTED THEM TO DO?**

- Look at the rest of the Psalm.
- They could see that God controlled all of nature and all of what happened to people on the earth.
- They could see that they would have the help of a very powerful God.

#### **WOULD SOMEONE READ THE LAST FOUR WORDS ON THE FIRST LINE OF THE PSALM.**

- It reads: הָבוּ לַיהוָה כְּבוֹד וְעֹז.
- We could translate that phrase as “Give to God honor or glory and strength or power.”
- ***But what does it mean that we should give those things to God? Doesn’t God already have glory and strength?***
- Maybe it means that we should begin to act like we really believe that God is glorious and strong.
- Sometimes it’s very hard to do the right thing because we feel like we’re all alone and there’s no one to help us to the right thing—and sometimes it’s very easy to do the wrong thing.
- So that’s a good time to remember that God has put the potential for goodness in every person, and if we do the right thing, the goodness that God has put into other people will help them to also do good—so we won’t be alone.
- ***Can you think of any times when it’s hard to do the right thing? Do you recall a time when you were really tempted to do the wrong thing—like hit someone or scream at someone?***

#### **THE NEXT PRAYER IN THE SIDDUR, L’CHA DODI ON PAGE 21, IS NOT A PSALM.**

- It was composed about 500 years ago (by R’ Shlomo HaLevi Alkabetz), long after King David wrote the Psalms.
- ***Would someone read the first four words in the first line of the Hebrew on page 21.***
- הָבֵה דָדִי לְקַרְאֵת כְּלָה properly translated means, “Come my Beloved to meet the Bride.”
- ***So who is “my Beloved” and who is the “Bride”?***
- Our Beloved is God!
- And the “bride” is תְּשׁוּבָה!
- ***But why would we think of תְּשׁוּבָה as a bride?***
- Because our tradition teaches that when God created תְּשׁוּבָה to be as beautiful as a bride, God told the Bride that Israel—the Jewish people, all of us—would be her husband.
- It’s like saying that all of the Jewish people are wedded, permanently connected, to תְּשׁוּבָה.
- And just like any married couple, we are to take care of one another: we keep and honor and protect תְּשׁוּבָה, and it does the same for us.

- *Can you think of any ways in which תָּשׁוּבָה takes care of us?*
- *But why might the first line of this prayer say, “Come my Beloved to meet the Bride?”*
  1. We want to have God with us, in our heart, when we welcome תָּשׁוּבָה.
  2. When we sing L’cha Dodi, it’s a very special time in the Friday night service.
  3. It’s the time when we think of ourselves, with God, welcoming the תָּשׁוּבָה—or maybe we’re not!
  4. Because when we welcome תָּשׁוּבָה, we’re saying that we’re really ready and willing to be the best person we can be, to be kind and fair to everyone.
  5. So when we sing L’cha Dodi, either we really mean it when we welcome תָּשׁוּבָה—that we’re going to be the best we can be—or we’re just fooling ourselves and other people.
- So all of the Psalms that we’ve sung up to now have given us a chance to get ready to welcome Shabbat, so that we really mean it when we sing, *L’cha dodi likrat Shabbat*—Come my Beloved to meet the Bride.