



THE SHALOM BAYIT JOURNAL



Parashat Ki Tavo

The Growth That Follows

Understanding the Torah and the Human Experience

Post-traumatic growth refers to the positive changes that can develop after a person goes through something difficult or traumatic. These changes can include a stronger sense of self, deeper relationships, clearer priorities, or a greater sense of meaning.

In a 2019 meta-analysis published in the Journal of Affective Disorders, researchers reviewed 26 studies involving more than 10,000 people who had experienced trauma. They found that roughly half reported moderate-to-high levels of post-traumatic growth.

In my counseling experience, I have found that the way we approach difficult experiences can shape what follows. How we understand what happened, how we process it, and what we choose to carry forward can all influence growth.

Parashat Ki Tavo gives us a clear example of this process. When bringing the first fruits, the Torah requires a person to say:

וְעִנִּיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶרְמִי אֲבִד אָבִי
וַיַּרְעוּ אֹתָנוּ הַמִּצְרִים וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה
וַנִּצָּעַק אֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וַיִּשְׁמַע ה' אֶת קוֹלָנוּ
וַיִּצְאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיָד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֶרַע נְטוּיָה
וַיְבִאֵנוּ אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתֵּן לָנוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת
וְעַתָּה הִנֵּה הַבָּאֲתִי אֶת רֵאשִׁית פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה
וְשִׂמַּחְתָּ בְּכָל הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לָךְ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ

"You shall speak and say before Hashem your God: 'An Aramean sought to destroy my father...' The Egyptians treated us harshly, afflicted us, and placed hard labor upon us. We cried out to Hashem, the God of our fathers, and Hashem heard our voice. Hashem brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. He brought us to this place and gave us this land. And now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land. You shall rejoice in all the good that Hashem your God has given you."

(Devarim 26:5–11)

Rashi writes:

וְעִנִּיתָ: לְשׁוֹן הֶרְמֵת קוֹל

"And you shall answer" is an expression of raising one's voice."

Rashi emphasizes the importance of speaking it aloud. Giving words to what we have been through can help us recognize where we came from, how the experience shaped us, and the growth that followed.





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Moshe Rabbeinu may have hinted at this idea earlier in Parashat Va'etchanan, when he described Egypt as an iron furnace:

וְאַתֶּכֶם לָקַח ה' וַיּוֹצֵא אֶתְכֶם מִכּוּר הַבְרָזִל מִמִּצְרַיִם

“Hashem took you and brought you out of Egypt,
from the iron furnace.”

(Devarim 4:20)

The Kli Yakar explains:

הַמְנִיקָה הַכֶּסֶף מִכָּל סִיג וּפְסָלָת עַד שֶׁיְהִיָּה נָקִי וְזָה... כִּן
נִדְּכָךְ חֹמֶר שְׁלֶכֶם בְּעֻנֵי מִצְרַיִם

“Just as silver is cleansed of its impurities until it
becomes clean and pure, so too you were refined
through the affliction of Egypt.”

Describing the slavery in Egypt as a furnace that refines silver points to the growth and refinement that emerged through what we endured as a nation. Challenges can shape us in ways we may only recognize later.

At the end of the parashah, Moshe tells the Jewish people:

וְלֹא נָתַן ה' לָכֶם לֵב לִדְעוֹת וְעֵינַיִם לִרְאוֹת
וְאֲזָנִים לִשְׁמֹעַ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה

“Hashem did not give you a heart to understand, eyes to see, or
ears to hear until this day.”

(Devarim 29:3)

It is only with time that we are able to look back and understand an experience differently, but it is up to us to choose how to understand it, how to see it, and how to make sense of it today.

Bikkurim gives that growth something tangible. וְעַתָּה, “and now.” After telling the story of hardship and redemption, the person is asked to look at what is in front of him now. He is standing in the land, holding the first fruits of what has grown, and the Torah tells him, וְשִׂמַּחְתָּ בְּכָל הַטּוֹב, “you shall rejoice in all the good.”

Post-traumatic growth involves carrying the difficulties we have experienced, making meaning from them, and becoming more aware of what has grown in our lives since. Bikkurim gives us a mitzvah through which we recognize that growth and appreciate the blessings that are here now.



About The Shalom Bayit Journal

The Shalom Bayit Journal explores the intersection of Torah, psychology, relationships, and the human experience. Through thoughtful essays and practical reflection, the Journal seeks to make timeless wisdom meaningful and accessible for everyday life.

