

Remarks from Rabbi Lisa Edwards to the adult b'not mitzvah students  
August 25, 2007  
Beth Chayim Chadashim, Los Angeles

I want to pick up on one of the other verses from your b'not mitzvah Torah portion: "If you see your fellow's ox or sheep gone astray, do not ignore it; you must take it back to your fellow." A bit later it says about returning any lost thing to your fellow: "you must not remain indifferent." And finally it says "if you see your fellow's donkey or ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it; you must help him lift it up." [Deut. 22:1-4]

"Do not ignore it; you must not remain indifferent," says our familiar translation, but both Everett Fox and Richard Friedman point out in their more literal translations that the Hebrew actually says *hitalamtah* and *l'hitaleim* "do not hide yourself" rather than "ignore" or "remain indifferent."

"Ignore" and "be indifferent" are nice interpretations, but they are not translations. Hiding yourself is different from ignoring something or being indifferent to someone else's plight. Hiding yourself is not only about shirking responsibility, it's about closeting yourself.

And why would you do that? Maybe hoping no one will notice you, maybe hoping you won't notice yourself-won't notice who you really are: someone who keeps rather than returns what belongs to someone else even though you know whose it is; or someone who doesn't try to find out whose lost object this was before you kept it for yourself.

Gavi, Donna, Linda, Cecilia –

Thank you for not hiding yourselves from who you are – thank you for not hiding the part of yourself that wants to study Torah and learn to chant it. Thank you for not stopping with what came easily and for going on to the next challenge, the next piece of learning, of Jewish tradition, of finding yourself and what is important to you.

"You shall return to your neighbors their donkeys, their clothes, any lost thing of your neighbors that will be lost by them and you find it. You may not hide yourself." Another nice touch in this month of Elul: the Hebrew word for "return" here -- "You shall return to your neighbors their donkeys" is, you guessed it, *t'shivim* - same root as *tshuvah* to turn, to return -- that activity of self-reflection that we're charged with this month of Elul [22:1].

Lo tukhal *l'hitaleim* - "You may not hide yourself," says God, in our Torah portion [Deut. 22:3], just two weeks and a few days from Rosh Hashanah.

Linda, Gavi, Donna, Cecilia,

In this month of Elul, in this season of *tshuvah*, of turning, thank you for coming out of hiding, for choosing yet another way of being of service by turning your hearts inward toward yourselves and discovering yet something else you wanted to accomplish...

And thank you for turning your hearts outward in yet another way toward others -- helping us find what we may have lost by showing us that as lifelong learners – that is, as Jews – there is always more to learn, more to do, and more to share with others.

Bless you for engaging in this endeavor and for sharing it with us.

Shabbat shalom