



Eikev

A singer or a Rabbi?

Who has an easier time, a singer or a Rabbi?

I've noticed that when singers perform, the audience wants to hear the melodies and the songs that they're familiar with. In fact, if a renowned singer were to miss out from a performance one of their most popular songs, the audience would be angry because they have come to hear what they've heard dozens of times before. They love it, they love the repetition!

But, when a Rabbi is preparing a sermon, a drosha or a shiur, he is under pressure to provide fresh insights, to deliver new ideas. People in his congregation are likely to be disappointed if they hear something that they have heard before.

There's a very relevant peirush of Rashi at the commencement of the second paragraph of the Shema which we read in Parshat Eikev. The Torah says: "vehaya im shamua tishmau" – "and it shall come to pass when you hear what you have heard before". Rashi tells us that when it comes to the teaching of Torah, it's important that we **do** hear what we have heard before.

Historically there were two different customs with regard to public Torah reading. There was the triennial system – where it took three years to go through the whole Torah and then there was the annual system where parsha after parsha were read within one year, with Simchat Torah at the end – which is what we do to this day.

But why did our Rabbis choose the latter over the former? Shul services would have been quicker with a triennial system because we would only be

reading a third of what we read right now from the Torah!

But the answer is that repetition is so important. We need to constantly be aware of Torah and so year after year we read the same portions, we hear the same ideas.

Of course, we should recognise that "shivim panim b' latorah" – "there are seventy angles to the Torah" but whilst we need to gain fresh depths, the material remains the same.

Mitzvah number 613 is "ve'ata kitvu lachem et hashira hazot" – "we must write this song". This mitzvah is about writing a Torah but we refer to Torah as a song. Because the song of Torah is such that we should constantly want to hear it again and again.

Therefore, Rabbis have an advantage over singers because we have both repetition and fresh insights! As a result, may we continuously always succeed in uplifting our communities and may the Jewish nation only go from strength to strength.

Shabbat Shalom.