



Ki Teitzei

Don't Be Like an Ammonite or a Moabite

What was wrong with the Moabites and the Ammonites? We're told that they were not to be brought into the assembly of God:

“עַל דִּבְרֵי אֲשֶׁר לֹא קִדְּמוּ אֶתְכֶם בִּלְחֶם וּבַמַּיִם”
“Because they didn't offer you bread and water”

This is a reference to when the Israelites were travelling through the wilderness on their way to the Holy Land, and they came across the Moabites and the Ammonites, who showed them no hospitality whatsoever. They didn't even offer bread or water - therefore, we should never be like them.

In the Midrash. Rabbi Shimon, in the name of Rabbi Eliezer, asks a great question: Was it so terrible that the Ammonites and Moabites didn't offer them anything? At that time the Israelites weren't thirsty - they were drinking water which came miraculously out of a rock. They weren't hungry - every day they had the Manna which was falling from Heaven.

Rabbi Shimon tells us that from here we learn that if it is unacceptable not to offer food and drink to those who *don't* need it, how much more terrible is it if you don't offer food and drink to those who *do* need it?

And from here we understand the importance of hospitality. But there is an added layer to this - because in the sharing of food, people are not just satiated; there is also a social element to it. By bringing people around a table, by showing hospitality, they will be touched by the warmth of your kindness.

It is inspirational. It brings people together. It brings nations together.

And indeed, when we show hospitality in our homes, not just to friends, but to other members of our community and beyond it, even if you know they would have food at home; It's not just to feed them - it's to bring them into our midst.

And the warmth of that reception is exceptionally powerful. So let's therefore heed the lesson of the Torah never to be like an Ammonite or a Moabite.

Shabbat Shalom.