

Bamidbar

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Hilula

29 - Rabbi Meir of Parmishlan

1 - Rabbi Meir HaLevi Horowitz

2 - Rabbi Yisrael of Vizhnitz

3 - Rabbeinu Ovadiah of Bartenura

4 - Rabbi Mantzur Marzok

5 - Rabbi Yosef Ezra Zalicha

6 - David Hamelech a"h, the sweet singer of Israel

Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zya



MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

The Banners Were a Sign of Unity

"The Children of Israel shall encamp, each man by his banner according to the insignias of their fathers' household, at a distance surrounding the Tent of Meeting shall they encamp"

(Bamidbar 2:2)

Only one year had passed from when Bnei Yisrael were enslaved and tormented under Pharaoh's command in Mitzrayim, and in this short period of time they grew into a structured and orderly nation, organized into formations of three tribes each, known as 'banners', with each 'banner' led by a designated tribe.

Chazal tell us (Midrash Rabba 2:3), "When Yisrael saw the angels arranged according to banners, they too desired banners. They said, if only we too could be arranged according to banners like them. Hashem said to them, 'You desired banners, by your lives, I will fulfill your request'. Immediately Hashem announced the banners to Yisrael by telling Moshe, go and arrange them according to banners as they desired."

The Midrash continues, "Moshe became distressed. He said, now dissension might erupt between the tribes. If I tell the tribe of Yehuda to dwell in the East and they say, we can only dwell in the South, and similarly with Reuven and Ephraim and all the other tribes, what should I do? Hashem said to him, Moshe, it is of no concern to you, they do not need you, they are familiar with their dwelling places by themselves since they possess a tradition and testament of how to encamp from their father Ya'akov. I am not introducing anything new for them, they already have an established order from Ya'akov Avinu, in the same way that they carried him and surrounded his coffin when he passed away, in that order will they surround the Mishkan."

How, though, did this answer placate Moshe Rabbeinu? At that time of Ya'akov's passing, his children numbered a total of twelve tribes (sons), but now after multiplying greatly in Mitzrayim, we are talking about myriads of thousands of Jewish people. When they left Mitzrayim they numbered 600,000 men besides the women and children. So if now they approach Moshe with claims and arguments, how in fact will Moshe Rabbeinu handle them?

I remember once an argument erupted during the Shacharit prayer in the Beit Knesset, concern-

ing the tune of the 'Az Yashir Moshe' prayer. Some of the congregants wanted a certain tune, while others demanded a different tune. The commotion grew until it was impossible to restore the peace. If this is the way of disputes, how could Moshe Rabbeinu prevail over the arguments that the delegation of banners and encampments might engender, G-d forbid?

Furthermore, the holy Arizal zya"a says that there are twelve gates in Heaven for receiving prayers, corresponding to the twelve tribes. Each tribe has his fixed version of text which he may not depart from, due to the dictum "Do not forsake the teaching of your mother". Here too, it is difficult to understand this concept for if peace and unity are so important, why should there not be one universal text for all?

The verse "The Children of Israel shall encamp, each man by his banner according to the insignias of their fathers' household, at a distance surrounding the Tent of Meeting shall they encamp", answers these questions. Although Am Yisrael are indeed divided into different camps, but when they all encamp around the Ohel Mo'ed (Tent of Meeting), when they all dwell around the holy Torah, the concern of separation and dispute disappears. If all share one goal – fulfilling the will of their Father in Heaven - disagreement will never erupt between them.

Rabbeinu Nissim Ravivo zya"a, the Av Beit Din of Paris, France, was of Moroccan descent yet all his teachers were Ashkenazic Sages. Similarly, the Rif and the Rambam zya"a were Spanish Sages yet all the Ashkenazic Sages follow their rulings.

My father zt"l too, as was his holy custom, would tell us stories about the Ba'al Shem Tov a"h (a Chasidic Master), to impart the lesson that when one encamps "surrounding the Ohel Moe'd", meaning around the holy Torah, then there are no rifts and no controversies, for a wonderful sense of unity reigns among all. This unity does not differentiate between land of origin or different cultural groups, for all of us are sons of one nation. We are all descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov and our joint goal is to fulfill the will of our Father in Heaven. On the contrary, each one assists the other with his Avodat Hashem, as in the concept "Each man would help his fellow and to his brother, he would say 'Be strong!'"



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Torah Saps a Person's Strength

One day a wealthy Jew approached me for a blessing for several concerns.

As a merit for the blessing to come to fruition, I asked him to donate from his abundant assets in support of Yeshiva students who study and toil in Torah, and in this way, he will be using his wealth to support Torah.

The rich man refused my request with the following justification, "Honorable Rav, I am a hard-working fellow. My wealth is a result of the considerable time and effort that I invest in my business, so I will not donate even one cent for Yeshiva bachurim who do not work for their living and squander their time on nothing but Torah study. From my point of view, they are lazy time-wasters and I am not in the habit of distributing my hard-earned cash to such people!"

These scornful words that he allowed himself to utter, out of complete ignorance and misunderstanding of the elevated status that Torah learning holds for Am Yisrael, were directed towards the most treasured sector of Am Yisrael, those who invest their entire beings in the holy Torah. On hearing his position, I suggested that he try and study Torah for one day only, and if he succeeds I will bless him with whatever he desires.

The wealthy individual laughed at my suggestion and replied: "No problem, I am even prepared to sit and study Torah for an entire week!"

Just as I thought, he sat on his place for quite some time and tried to concentrate on what was being studied, just like the Yeshiva students. But when his attempts were unsuccessful, he quickly gave up and came to the clear conclusion that Torah study is something essentially difficult which demands toil and great effort, and there is no place to belittle those who tirelessly toil in study Torah. After all, it is in their merit that the entire world exists.

From then on, he held Yeshiva students in great esteem and merited donating considerable sums to our distinguished Yeshiva and other Torah institutions. He merited becoming a 'Zevulun', one who supports those who study the holy Torah and thereby merits a share in their learning.

The Haftarah

"Yonatan said to him, "Tomorrow is the New Moon"

(Shmuel I, 20)

The connection to the Parsha: The day following this Shabbat (Sunday) will be Rosh Chodesh Iyar. This is the connection to the Haftarah in which the verse says, "Tomorrow is the New Moon".

Guard Your Tongue

Praising One's Friend

There are various forms of speech that are forbidden because they are considered as 'avak lashon hara' (suggestion of lashon hara), for example saying, "Who would have believed that so and so would turn out in this way". Or: "Let's not talk about so and so, I don't want to go into details about what happened and what will be", and other similar references where although nothing derogatory has been said, they have a negative connotation.

Praising someone in front of his enemy is also considered as 'avak lashon hara' because this will cause the enemy to begin speaking negatively about him.



In Our Father's Path

Forgetting About the Sandwich and the Coffee

On the verse in this Parsha, "Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai", the Midrash expounds: "From here our Sages learnt, the Torah was given through three things, with fire, with water and in the desert. Why was it given with these three things? To teach us that just as these are free for all human beings, so too the words of Torah are free." The Midrash continues to explain the implication of desert: "One who does not make himself ownerless like a desert, cannot acquire spiritual wisdom and the Torah".

Rabbi Yitzchak David Grossman shlita, in astonishment, points out that this concept seems to oppose rational thinking. In every profession that someone wishes to train and qualify in, he is first assessed for suitability, meaning one verifies that he is mentally stable and is capable of handling the project, for if not, one would be concerned about allowing him to specialize in this area. If an unkempt individual shows up for a job interview, it is likely that tomorrow he will find himself at yet another interview. No employer seeks to hire a disorderly disheveled worker.

However, concerning the Torah we are told, "For you can have no freer man than one who engages in the study of the Torah". When a person makes himself ownerless and unattached then he is able to acquire Torah and wisdom. A desert is a place that is neither owned nor cultivated. Only if a person makes himself ownerless and has no preconceived 'cultivated' ideas or demands, is he able to acquire Torah and wisdom. For the Torah is a G-dly wisdom, and if man would approach it with his own superficial opinions, he will not be able to grasp the Torah.

The great Gaon Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer's zt"l was sitting and delving into the holy words of the Torah, together with a young bachur who had come to study with him. At midday, the righteous Rabbanit, Baila Hinda a"h, returned from the Machaneh Yehuda market loaded with baskets of provisions in honor of the approaching festival of Pesach. She had bought horseradish for the Maror and radishes for Karpas. As she entered her home, she noticed the coffee, bread and vegetables that she had prepared for her husband, lying abandoned on the dining room table. She approached her husband and enquired, "Why did you not yet eat?"

The Rosh Yeshiva as if shook himself out of a trance and answered innocently, "Do you not see, Rabbanit, the distinguished guest that is sitting here with me? He is a young Torah scholar who wished to discuss Torah matters. How could I interrupt our learning for something so mundane?"

But the Rabbanit persisted: "My dear husband, what would have happened if you would have told the young bachur to wait a few moments while you tasted something?" Rabbi Isser Zalman did not understand and explained with the utmost modesty: "Am I some kind of professor that can keep people waiting?"

This is a wonderful demonstration of Chazal's explanation of "One who does not make himself ownerless, in the sense of unattached, like a desert cannot acquire spiritual wisdom and the Torah"...



Pearls of the Parsha

To Avert Embarrassment

"Moshe and Aharon took these men who had been designated by [their] names" (Bamidbar 1:17)

Moshe Rabbeinu could have chosen the men himself since their greatness was clearly recognizable, these were the leaders of the tribes who were the ones summoned when important matters were discussed by the assembly. However, so as not to offend those who were not chosen, Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem to name them.

Furthermore, Harav Tzvi Polias shlita points out, when taking these men, first it says "Moshe and Aharon took these men", and only after that, "They gathered together the entire assembly" so that no one should be embarrassed when his friend was called upon, while he himself was not chosen.

There is a fascinating story told on this topic. After Rabbi Akiva Eiger's engagement, his father-in-law invited him to his home town, eager to introduce his gifted son-in-law to the townsfolk. The Talmidei Chachamim gathered in the Beit Midrash and the father-in-law looked forward to his son-in-law the Gaon addressing the audience with words of wisdom.

To his dismay, the son-in-law stood there in silence. The astounded father-in-law wished to break off the engagement. His son-in-law asked for a reprieve of two days and then agreed to enlighten the participants with his Torah thoughts.

When he was asked why he had endangered his engagement, he answered that there was another chatan present in the Beit Midrash, whose father-in-law was also very proud of him, and had he agreed to speak, this would have diminished the other chatan's value in his father-in-law's eyes. This is why he kept quiet.

Counting the People Without Reason

"As Hashem commanded Moshe, he counted them in the Wilderness of Sinai" (Bamidbar 1:19)

Why did the Torah see fit to point out that the counting of Yisrael was "as Hashem commanded Moshe"? Is this not obvious?

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains: Normally, there is benefit in a country knowing the exact number of its citizens.

This knowledge can be used to estimate

the different needs of the citizens, for example the amount of food required and so forth. However, when Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, they ate and drank as much as they desired. They ate Manna that fell from the heavens, they drank water from the Well and they were surrounded by Clouds of Glory which washed and ironed their clothes. Even the young, growing children did not require new clothing since their clothing grew with them. Therefore, they did not need food, drink or clothing, nor protection from enemies. This being the case, there was no practical benefit of knowing the exact number of Bnei Yisrael while they were in the desert.

This is the implication of the verse: "As Hashem commanded Moshe, he counted them in the Wilderness of Sinai". Had this not been a G-dly command, it would not have seemed necessary to count them. But once Hashem gave over this command, it must be obeyed completely without doubting it, even if one does not see the reason for it.

Why Did Gad Merit Moshe being Buried in His Lot?

"And the leader of the children of Gad is Eliasaph son of Reuel" (Bamidbar 2:14)

Rabbeinu the Chida zt"l, in his sefer 'Chomat Anoch', quotes the 'Imrei Noam' who writes that Gad merited Moshe Rabbeinu being buried in his lot because when Moshe appointed Dan as the leader of the banner, Gad could have claimed: I am the firstborn of Zilpah and Dan is the firstborn of Bilhah, why was I not chosen?

Since he remained quiet and did not speak up, the leader of Gad's tribe is referred to here as "Eliasaph son of Reuel", even though his name was in fact "son of Deuel". This alludes to the fact that since he elevated himself, he merited 'Reu-el', literally "friend of Hashem" referring to Moshe Rabbeinu, being buried in his lot!

He adds how appropriate it is that particularly now when talking about the banners, he is referred to as 'son of Reuel', written with the letter 'reish', while at the beginning of the Parsha, when talking about the leaders and their offerings, he is called 'son of Deuel', the first letter being a 'daled'. This implies that in the merit of his sacrifice concerning the banners he was awarded this honor!

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



The Creator Waits for Man to Repent

"And as for the redemptions of the two hundred and seventy-three of the firstborn of the Children of Israel who are in excess of the Levites" (Bamidbar 3:46)

Why did Hashem did not make the total number of Leviim correspond to the exact number of firstborns? What lies behind the excess 'firstborns' who then needed to be redeemed?

It seems that the Torah wishes to teach us a fundamental principle. Even if a person sins and does not act in accordance with Hashem's will, he should not despair by saying, I have fallen to such a low level that I can no longer rectify my ways. For just like the excess 'firstborns' had no corresponding Leviim since they were greater in number, nevertheless, Hashem found a remedy for them through the redemption procedure. So too the sinner should know that for him too there is a way to rectify, for the Creator, blessed be His Name forever, does not take His creations to account severely and knows that "the imagery of man's heart is evil from his youth", and if he repents fully he can rectify his wrongdoings and return to his previous virtuous state.

Someone approached me, most distraught. For the last ten years, he had been laying tefillin every day and he just found out that there were no parshiot in them... He was utterly distressed and wished to know how he could rectify all these years of not fulfilling the mitzvah.

I explained to him that nothing stands in the way of repentance. The Creator is forbearing and forgiving and if he accepts upon himself from now on to lay a quality pair of tefillin, and when wearing them undertakes not to talk about any worldly matters which will add to their holiness, I guarantee that the mitzvah will be considered for him as if he laid quality tefillin all those years. For the Creator waits for man's repentance which removes and atones for the sin.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Sefer Bamidbar begins by saying that Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness. The telling question is, why was the Torah given specifically in a desert?

Desert is an ownerless and uncultivated place, lacking all basic living conditions. No water, no electricity, no air conditioning. How can one survive in the desert? There is only one way: By lifting one's eyes to Hashem and trusting that He will provide man with all his needs and protect him from the dangers of the desert.

So it was with the generation who lived in the Wilderness. They merited the Pillar of Cloud that straightened the path for them, the Manna, Heavenly food, and a Well of water that travelled with them wherever they went.

The reason why the Torah was given in the desert is to teach us how to live a life of Torah. A person who studies Torah needs to ignore all that is happening around him and not pay attention to the surrounding conditions. He must place his trust in Hashem and cast his burden on Him.

Concerning this David Hamelech writes (Tehillim 55:23) "Cast upon Hashem your burden and He will sustain you; He will never allow the faltering of the righteous". If you trust in Hashem, you will not lack anything!

"One who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him"

Morning arrives, the father wakes his son for another day of Torah study in his Talmud Torah. Today too, as always, his mother prepared a fresh, nutritious sandwich for him and placed it in his lunch bag. The hour is getting late, the child leaves the house in a rush and makes his way to the Talmud Torah. On arrival, he enters his classroom, sits down in his place and then suddenly remembers that he forgot to take the bag with his sandwich...

"What will be?" he worries, "for so many hours I will go hungry until I get home?"

For a moment he is filled with concern, but this feeling immediately makes way for a genuine feeling of tranquility and trust. "I know my parents, they will do anything to make sure I won't remain hungry."

Sure enough, at the very moment when the child is sunk in thought, the father finds the lunch bag lying on the kitchen table. He thinks

to himself, "Oh no! What will be? There's no way that my dear son can go without food an entire morning, how will he have the strength to learn?"

What will be? It is clear what will be. Despite being pressed for time, the father grabs the bag, stops a taxi and hurries to the Talmud Torah to bring his child the nutritious sandwich so that he should have a productive morning of Torah learning.

What is the conclusion? The child was right! He had nothing to worry about! He was certain that his father would do anything for him and this is indeed what happened.

Returning home from the Talmud Torah, the father reasons: "It is true that the trip took away my precious time and even involved a considerable expense. But what doesn't a father do for his child! And what doesn't a father do that his son should be able to study diligently without any hindrance!"

We all understand that this story is nothing out of the ordinary. This is how every devoted father will react and this is the feeling of every son who relies on his father and trusts in him.

All this is only an illustration to demonstrate clearly the relationship of our merciful Father in Heaven to His beloved children, who studiously devote themselves to Torah and service of Him. The Creator of the World will not leave us to survive on our own. He will worry for us and fill every lack. How? Don't worry! Hashem has many ways. All that is required of us is faith and trust in Him. "One who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him."

Not always were parents able to send their child to the Talmud Torah with a fresh, appetizing sandwich. What happens when poverty is the norm and there isn't even a plain piece of bread for the child?

About this, the Torah says: "Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai". Those who travel through the desert do not present any preconceived conditions. They know that in order to arrive at their destination they must cross the desert, come what may. They have no stipulations and no expectations.

So too with the holy Torah! Torah study is not dependent on any external factor. Our Torah is a Torah of life, it is the elixir of life. Whatever the conditions – one studies Torah, without setting up conditions and without expecting anything.

Activating the Inner Voice

The sefer 'Pri Amalenu' offers a different reason for why the Torah was given in the desert.

One year, at the end of the semester in the Lomzha yeshiva, twenty-six students went to

take leave of their master and teacher, the Gaon Rabbi Yechiel Michel Gordon zt"l. Each student would now set off on his own path, wherever life would lead him.

The Rosh Yeshiva wished to provide them with 'provisions' for their journey, something that would be suitable for each and every one of them. And indeed he inspired them with the following insight.

My sons, he turned to his beloved students, many of you will no doubt merit receiving Rabbinical positions, while others may not. Let me tell you a story that will serve as a guide to you for life.

The Russian Czar, Nikolai the first, once went on a tour of all the countries under his reign. When he arrived at the first country, he was warmly welcomed by the local governor. The Czar turned to him and asked: "How do you administer the country's affairs?"

"Exactly according to the law!" was his reply.

The Czar treated him to a menacing look and declared: "You are dismissed from your position as governor!"

The thousands of citizens were in shock. They could not understand what had happened. Where did the governor go wrong?! But not one person dared protest the Czar's decision, especially since this was Nikolai the first ym"sh, known as a cruel tyrant and nicknamed "The Iron Czar".

That evening at the festive dinner, after the Czar had downed several cups of vodka and was in a good mood, one of the royal entourage plucked up the courage and asked the Czar the meaning of the strange riddle. Why was the governor fired from his position only because he was particular to keep to the laws?

This was the Czar's answer: To govern a country according to the letter of the law, exactly as is recorded in the books, there is no need for a ruler. For this a police sergeant is good enough...

The message of this story is clear: To live as a Jew, the Torah must become the 'Living Torah'. The 'fifth section' of Shulchan Aruch was never printed but nevertheless must be applied. (There are only four sections in the Shulchan Aruch, that which is referred to as the fifth section is the volume of 'common sense'.) To understand the correct conduct for every step of the way, it is impossible to behave like a small-minded police sergeant and just go by the book, excusing oneself with the fact that one is behaving 'according to the rules'. Rather, in addition to keeping to the laws, a person must also activate his inner, personal voice to guide him as to the correct way to behave in each situation.