



# Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFKA & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

פ ר ש ת ב מ ד ב ר

וידבר ה' אל משה במדבר סיני באהל מועד וכו':

It doesn't seem necessary for the Torah to point out that when Hashem spoke to Moshe in the ohel mo'ed that it was also in the midbar Sinai. Of what relevance is it that this exchange took place in the desert?

HaRav Moshe Shternbuch shlit"a suggests that the Torah is hinting to us how to come close to Hashem. Just like a midbar is hefker and ownerless, so too every yid has the ability to come and draw near to the Shechina because he is not beholden to anyone but Hashem. The way to do this is also suggested by the word "midbar". People are heavily influenced by their friends and surroundings. While community can play a most positive role in a life of avodas Hashem, it can also heavily detract from it. If one views himself as if he is living in a desert; paying no attention to the negative influences of those around him, as if they don't exist, he can be successful in becoming closer to Hashem.

שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל למשפחתם לבית אבתם במספר שמות כל זכר לגלגלתם:

HaRav Elchonon Wasserman HY"D notes that in instructing Moshe regarding taking the census, the posuk makes specific mention of the families "l'mishpechosom". Instead of telling Moshe to count the number of mishpachos, Hakadosh Boruch Hu includes it in his instruction of se'u - "elevate". Explains Rav Elchonon, that the family unit is more than just a way of subdividing



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segments of k'lal Yisroel. Rather, it is central to Judaism. Chazal tell us that one of the reasons Nadav and Avihu were punished was because they failed to get married and raise families. Surely they meant well, thinking that their role as parents would interfere with their own personal growth and service of Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Nevertheless, the Torah calls this a “foreign fire”.

The Torah tells us that after matan Torah, the b'nei Yisroel complained that they could no longer marry close relatives. Perhaps it was because they knew the importance of the family unit that they desired to marry within their own family. We would also like to suggest that perhaps this is why all agree that Shavuos must be celebrated on a physical level as well: The gemara (Pesachim 68b) cites a machlokes between R' Eliezer and R' Yehoshua regarding how one should properly celebrate yom tov. R' Eliezer maintains that one must decide whether he is going to spend the entire day in the beis medrash in spiritual pursuits, or spend the entire day eating, drinking and physically enjoying yom tov. R' Yehoshua tells us that one should split his time, devoting some of his time to simchas yom tov, and spending part of the day in the beis medrash growing spiritually. Although the halacha clearly follows R' Yehoshua, the gemara tells us that on Shavuos, even R' Eliezer agrees that one must also celebrate with food and drink since “it is the day the Torah was given to k'lal Yisroel”. This begs explanation. After all, if R' Eliezer maintains that true expression of celebration is when it is of a spiritual nature, then this should



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certainly true of the day we received the Torah! However, since “family” is essential to Torah true Judaism, one cannot fully celebrate by remaining within the walls of the beis ha’medrash alone. Although (according to R’ Eliezer) this may be true of Succos and Pesach, this is because these yomim tovim are expression of our closeness and avodah of Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Shavuos however, is the day we received the Torah - the day we became k’lal Yisroel, a nation that “celebrates” family.

## למשפחותם

HaRav Elchonon Wasserman HY”D notes that in instructing Moshe regarding taking the census, the posuk makes specific mention of the families “l’mishpechosom”. Instead of telling Moshe to count the number of mishpachos, Hakadosh Boruch Hu includes it in his instruction of se’u - “elevate”. Explains Rav Elchonon, that the family unit is more than just a way of subdividing segments of k’lal Yisroel. Rather, it is central to Judaism. Chazal tell us that one of the reasons Nadav and Avihu were punished was because they failed to get married and raise families. Surely they meant well, thinking that their role as parents would interfere with their own personal growth and service of Hakadosh Boruch Hu. Nevertheless, the Torah calls this a “foreign fire”.

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לבני יוסף לבני אפרים:

When the Torah instructs us vis-a-vis the encampment of the shevatim in the midbar, it refers to the sons of Yosef as the “bnei Yosef l'bnei Ephraim”, although elsewhere, the Torah simply says “l'bnei Yosef, l'Ephraim...”. The Baal HaTurim explains the addition of the extra “bnei” as follows: When the Shevatim carried Yaakov to burry him in Eretz Yisroel, Yosef did not take an active part in the funeral procession since carrying the coffin would contradict the royal dignity he needed to profess. To this end, the Torah added a word to distance Yosef from the encampment in the desert, the formation of which is very much connected to the transporting of Yaakov’s body for burial.

This answer itself begs explanation. Why should Yosef be excluded from the encampment? After all, it wasn’t his fault that he didn’t participate in his father’s burial. As a ruler in Mitzrayim it was incumbent upon him to conduct himself as a king. We don’t find anywhere in the Torah or divrei Chazal that Yosef is criticized for his conduct.

The Alter of Kelm explains that we see from here that when it comes to mitzvos, excuses don’t count. Although one may not be held accountable for not fulfilling mitzvos which he could not do, the consequences and resulting effects are lost.