

עזרי דשע

**Alei Deshe - Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on
the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"za of Gur**

In Our Fathers' Footsteps

When Moshe gathered Bnei Yisrael to be counted, the pasuk (Bamidbar 1:18) says, וַיִּתְּיָדוּ עַל מִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אָבֲתָם - *and they established their genealogy according to their families*. The word וַיִּתְּיָדוּ literally means that they were born, but what is its meaning in this pasuk? Rashi explains that they brought their *sifrei yichus*, their genealogy records.

The *Kedushas Levi*, however, understands וַיִּתְּיָדוּ in its literal sense: they were born. How was this? The Gemara (Sanhedrin 58a) teaches that non-Jews' lineage follows the maternal line. This is why the nations are referred to as לאומים, which is related to the word אַמָּה, mother. But why is this so? When Chazal wish to emphasize that somebody is mere flesh and blood, they use the expression יָלֹד אִשָּׁה, [one who was] born to a woman.¹ This is because a mother provides her children with their physicality. A father's job is to impart spirituality to his children, such as by teaching them Torah. The Gemara (Makkos 17b) relates a remark by one of the *Chachamim*: דִּילִידָא אַמִּיהָ כַּרְבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן תִּילִיד - One whose mother will (shortly) give birth – let her give birth to a child like R. Shimon!" This *berachah* meant that even the mother's share of the child should be pure and refined like R. Shimon bar Yochai.

The *Kedushas Levi* explains that this is why the lineage of non-Jews follows the maternal line. When a person's entire life revolves around material pleasure – he eats to live and lives to eat – his whole existence is the physicality that is given to him by his mother.

Yidden, on the other hand, began to be traced by the paternal line, once they accepted the Torah and constructed the *Mishkan*, having become a nation that lives for *ruchniyus*. This, the *Kedushas Levi* says, is why the Torah states וַיִּתְּיָדוּ עַל מִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אָבֲתָם - *they became born according to the house of their fathers*. They were born anew in such a way that henceforth their lineage would be spiritually enhanced and follow their fathers' line.

On a deeper level, we can see that the approaches of Rashi and the *Kedushas Levi* are one and the same. It is told that a man once approached R. Aharon of Belz and told him that he knows with certainty that he descends from R. Elimelech of Lizhensk but does not know the exact details of the genealogy. R. Aharon remarked, "אָז מ'ווייסט, איז גאר עפעס אנדערשט - When one knows, it is entirely different." *Yichus* carries more prestige when its details are known, when one's ancestry is clear. But it runs even deeper than that; when one knows and internalizes his *yichus*, it has a great impact on

his way of life.

The pasuk (Melachim I 1:6) says about Adoniyahu, son of David Hamelech, וְלֹא עֲצָבוּ אָבִיו מִיָּמָיו - *All his days, his father had never saddened him*. My father would often repeat the explanation of the *Tiferes Shlomo*², that Adoniyahu was never saddened by the fact that he hadn't become great like his father; his father was a *tzaddik* and he wasn't. *You had a father like David Hamelech; and how do you look?*

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1 See Shabbos 88b

2 *Likutei Nach*

לעילוי נשמת
מרת
עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל

This, then, was the genealogy records that Bnei Yisrael brought with them. They knew clearly from whom they descended, and they improved their ways by following in their ancestors' footsteps. They were now reborn **לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם** - on their paternal line, and living the spiritual lives that their fathers had imparted to them.

This lesson is contained in Chazal's reference to Chumash Bamidbar as "*Chumash HaPekudim*."³ The word "*pekudim*" is related to the Gemara's expression (Pesachim 33b), **מִיִּפְקָד פְּקִידֵי** - *contained internally*. *Chumash HaPekudim* is about Klal Yisrael's internal *koach* which we inherit from our fathers. Every generation of Yidden maintains a connection to previous generations – the Avos, the *Shevatim*, and all who followed. Through tapping into **לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם**, we can attain some of their great spiritual heights.

The Midrash⁴ relates that when Hashem commanded Moshe to organize the *shevatim* into specific encampments, he was distressed: "Now disputes will arise between the *shevatim*. If I instruct Shevet Yehudah to camp in the east, he [may] respond, 'I only want [to camp] in the south'; and so with each *shevet*." Hashem replied, "Moshe, why do you care? They don't need you. They know on their own where they should camp, by tradition from Yaakov. Just as they carried him and surrounded his bed, so will they surround the *Mishkan*."

This Midrash needs explanation. What connection is there between Klal Yisrael's positions around Yaakov's bed to their positions around the *Mishkan*? Based on the above it is clear. When Yaakov Avinu took leave of his sons, he imparted to them – and to all their future generations – a *koach* that would live inside them. Now, each one would know where he belongs and what he must achieve in this world.



3 See Yoma 68b, Sotah 36b

4 Bamidbar Rabbah 2:8

5 Bamidbar Rabbah 1:7

6 It is notable that we read Parshas Bamidbar (literally: "In the desert") before Shavuos, when we commemorate *Mattan Torah*.

Adding On

אִישׁ עַל דְּגָלוֹ בְּאֶתֶר לְבֵית אֲבֹתָם יִחַנוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִנְּגֻד סָבִיב לְאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד יִחַנוּ

The Bnei Yisrael shall encamp, each man by his banner according to the insignias of their fathers' household; at a distance surrounding the Ohel Moed shall they encamp. (Bamidbar 2:2)

The pesukim continue by describing each *shevet*'s position around the *Mishkan*. The *mefarshim* point out that several times the pasuk introduces the next tribe with, **וְהָחִיִּם עָלָיו** - Encamping near him are..."; but following Shevet Menashe, the

pasuk (2:20) simply says **וְעָלָיו מִטַּה מְנַשֶּׁה** - Near him are the tribe of Menashe," omitting the word **וְהָחִיִּם**.

The *kadmonim*⁷ explain that Ephraim and Menashe aren't just neighbors; since they are both children of Yosef, they are like a single *shevet*. This is why they are connected simply with **וְעָלָיו**.

We may suggest another approach. The Gemara (Shabbos 10b) teaches a lesson learned from *mechiras Yosef*: **לְעוֹלָם אֵל יִשְׁנָה אָדָם בְּנוֹ בֵּין הַבָּנִים** - *One should never treat one son differently than the others.*

Certainly, Yaakov learned this lesson after discovering that Yosef had been sold. Yet, when Yosef presented his own sons to Yaakov to be blessed, Yaakov gave precedence to the younger son, Ephraim, over Menashe, the *bechor*, as the pasuk (Bereishis 48:20) states, **וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת אֶפְרַיִם לְקֵדְמֵי מְנַשֶּׁה** - *and he put Ephraim before Menashe*. Rashi explains that he placed Ephraim's encampment before Menashe's. How could Yaakov have done this, following Yosef's experience? Evidently, Yaakov knew for certain that Menashe would accept this with no hard feelings or complaints whatsoever.

(במדבר תשפ"ב, ס"ג מאמר א)

7 See *Moshav Zekeanim*

The *Zohar hakadosh*⁸ states that one who is small is great. Menashe, holding himself small and lovingly accepting that his rightful prominence would go to his younger brother, attained a *madreigah* above Ephraim. Thus, the Torah writes about Ephraim, וְעָלְיוּ מִטָּה מִנַּשֶּׁה, which means literally, *Shevet Menashe is above him*.

Let us suggest another, deeper approach. Rachel named her son Yosef, saying (Bereishis 30:21), יִסְרָח ה' לִי בֶן אַחֵר - *May Hashem add on for me another son*. Yosef's name was an expression of Rachel's longing to gain *more*. She certainly didn't yearn for more *gashmiyus*; she pined for a profusion of *ruchniyus*. This idea is expressed in the following pasuk (Tehillim 146:2) as well: אֲזַמְרָה לְאֱלֹהֵי בְעוֹדִי - *I will sing to my G-d בְּעוֹדִי, while I exist*. A Yid's עוֹדִי - as in עוד, *more* - what he adds and increases to his basic obligations, growing in *kedushah* and distancing himself from sin - is a great song of praise to Hashem.⁹

Since Rachel instilled this *middah* of longing in Yosef; his progeny, in particular, excelled in it. As the pasuk (Yirmiyahu 31:19) says, הֲבֵן יִקְרֶה לִי אֶפְרַיִם, - *Is Ephraim My favorite son or a delightful child, that whenever I speak of him I remember him more and more?* When Hashem remembers Ephraim's עוד - his yearning for additional growth in *kedushah* and *taharah* - Hashem remembers him with special love.

This is why the Torah doesn't say וְהִחַיְתֵם regarding Ephraim and Menashe. Yosef's children don't camp - they don't place their feet on the ground and resign themselves to their place and station. Rather, they are וְעָלְיוּ, always reaching higher, limiting their indulgence in this world's pleasures in order to grow and ascend in *madreigos*.

The Gemara (Pesachim 68b) relates Rav Yosef's declaration in regard to Shavuos: אֵי לֹא הָאֵי יוֹמָא - *If not for this day's impact, how many Yosefs would there be in*

the marketplace? Rav Yosef meant that if not for *kabbalas haTorah*, the inherent greatness of the name Yosef would have gone lost. What would any random Yosef seek to add - materialism? marketplace ventures? Thanks to the Torah we accepted on Shavuos, we can now pursue additional *kedushah* and growth in *avodas Hashem*.

Rav Yosef was the right person to say this. *Teshuvos HaGeonim* relates that Rav Yosef undertook not to look outside of his four *amos*. When he

the ways of Yosef HaTzaddik. Every person can attain increasingly more *kedushah* by adding protective measures to limit his worldly indulgence and strengthen his *shemiras einayim*.

The Gemara¹² speaks of properly guarded eyes as עֵין שְׁלֵא רָצְתָה לִיזוֹן מִמָּה שְׂאִינוּ שְׁלוּ - *An eye that did not seek to be satisfied by what did not belong to it*.¹³ This is the proper approach: one shouldn't avoid sights because they are forbidden, but because they do not belong to him. A *talmid chacham*

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could not keep his *kabbalah* without blinding himself, he proceeded to blind himself.¹⁰ Where did he get this strength of longing for added *kedushah*? From the *kabbalas haTorah* of Shavuos.

The Gemara (Berachos 55b) states that if one is fearful of *ayin hara*, he should say, "I, *ploni ben ploni*, am a descendant of Yosef, on whom *ayin hara* did not have power." The *mefarshim* wonder about this: one certainly cannot trick his way out of *ayin hara*; if he is not a descendant of Yosef, why would it help to say that he is? The Maharsha answers that all Jews are considered Yosef's children, as the pasuk (Tehillim 77:16) says, בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב וַיִּוֹסֶף סֵלָה - *the sons of Yaakov and Yosef, Selah*.¹¹

If any Yid can identify as Yosef's descendant to ward off *ayin hara*, most certainly he can tap into the *koach* of Yosef's name and attach himself to

feels that this world is not his place,¹⁴ so he has no business looking out of his four *amos*. We can proclaim, "I am a descendant of Yosef!" and guard our eyes so they are sustained only on Torah and *kedushah*.

On Shavuos we go to greet the King, as the pasuk (Shemos 34:23) says, שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יִרְאֶה כָּל זָכוֹרְךָ, - *Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Master, Hashem, the G-d of Yisrael*. As the Midrash¹⁵ teaches, if one shields his eyes from forbidden sights, he will be *zoche* to greet the Shechinah. In preparation for the Yom Tov when we accept the Torah, we must strengthen our *shemiras einayim* with *kedushah* and *taharah*, so that we may indeed draw close and merit to greet Hashem.

(במדבר תשפ"א, ס"ג מאמר ב)

8 Vol. 1, 122b

9 See *Ibra D'dasha, Yerach Ha'Eisanim* p. 64-65

10 See *Ibra D'dasha*, vol. 2 p. 141

11 Similarly, the pasuk (Tehillim 80:2) states, - נִהַג כְּצֹאן יוֹסֵף, - *You Who leads Yosef like a flock*. See Midrash Tehillim 3, and *Baal HaTurim*, Bereishis 48:16.

12 Berachos 20a, Zevachim 118b

13 See Berachos *ibid*, that this *middah* was the reason *ayin hara* didn't affect Yosef.

14 See *Derech Eretz Zuta* 1:1

15 *Vayikra Rabbah* 23:13

Na'aseh V'nishma: Valid Commitment?

*Shulchan Aruch*¹⁶ writes: “One who obligates himself in an unspecified matter (*davar she'eino katzuv*); for example, to supply his friend with food or clothes for five years (or if he did not give any limitation of years – *Rema*) – following the Rambam’s opinion, he is not bound by this even if an act of *kinyan* was performed.”

Chachmei Sefarad asked:¹⁷ According to this principle, how was Bnei Yisrael’s declaration of *na'aseh v'nishma* binding? After all, they didn’t know what they were accepting, so it was a *davar she'eino katzuv*.

By way of introduction, the reason an obligation of *davar she'eino katzuv* is not binding is because the one becoming obligated is not *gomer da'as*, he does not fully commit himself, since the obligation is not clearly defined. There is another scenario where lack of commitment invalidates a transaction: when dealing with a yet-nonexistent item (*davar shelo ba la'olam*).

Regarding a *davar shelo ba la'olam*, the Rivash¹⁸ maintains that it could be transacted before *Mattan Torah*. Accordingly, an unspecified obligation as well – sharing the same shortcoming as a *davar shelo ba la'olam* – would have been binding before *Mattan Torah*. Thus, Bnei Yisrael’s acceptance of the Torah was valid.

One might argue that since with this very acceptance of the Torah, obligations of unspecified matters became non-binding, perhaps the acceptance could not have taken effect. But this is not so, because if indeed the acceptance were not valid, then a *davar she'eino katzuv* would be binding – and the acceptance would be valid. And once the acceptance was valid – Bnei Yisrael were bound to the Torah.¹⁹

In *Yeshuos Malko*,²⁰ R. Yehoshua of Kutna cites an explanation from his father for why transactions of yet-nonexistent items

were valid before *Mattan Torah*. The Gemara (Shabbos 88b) states that the entirety of Creation hung in the balance until the day of *Mattan Torah*. Since before *Mattan Torah* all of Creation was in a state of limbo and nothing was considered fixed, there was no significant difference between something existent and something not-yet existent. Only after *Mattan Torah* did Creation attain permanence, so that existent items could be considered more fit for transaction than not-yet existent items.²¹

Following this explanation, we may consider what would have occurred had only part of Klal Yisrael accepted the Torah. Would the in-limbo status of the world have been settled, leading to the invalidation of *davar shelo ba la'olam* transactions, and by extension, of *davar she'eino katzuv* obligations; or did that only happen because all of Klal Yisrael accepted the Torah?

It would seem that the permanence of Creation would have been worthwhile even for a single Yid; certainly, if most of Bnei Yisrael had accepted the Torah, the world would have become fixed, since the world is judged in terms of majority.

This is what the *paytan* meant with, “ובאו כולם בברית יחד” - And they all entered the covenant (of Torah) together.” What is the significance of Bnei Yisrael having accepted the Torah *together*? If some Yidden would have accepted the Torah before others, Creation would have become fixed with the first group’s acceptance, henceforth invalidating *davar she'eino katzuv* obligations, so the rest of Bnei Yisrael could not have said *na'aseh v'nishma*. Only because they all accepted the Torah together were they all able to do so with *na'aseh v'nishma*.

(בנאות דשא – חג השבועות ויזמא דהילולא דרבינו האמרי אמת ז"ע, תשפ"א)

16 C.M. 60:2

17 See *Sedei Chemed*, *Ma'areches 4*, *Davar She'eino Katzuv* no. 8

18 328

19 See *Tosafos*, *Eiruv* 31b s.v. *v'nasan* (at the end); see also *Kovetz Eitz Chaim*, issue 1 from p. 63

20 *Likutei Torah*, *Toldos*

21 See *Ibra D'dasha* vol. 2 p. 32 on this topic

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