



Parshat Bamidbar: The Strength of Torah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Chassidut by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The parsha starts with a command to Moshe to count the Jewish people and the tribe of Levy. The Torah introduces this command by stating that it occurred in the Sinai Desert in the Tent of Meeting. The Zohar asks, why does the Torah delineate the specific location, *Midbar Sinai* and *Ohel Moed*, in the context of counting the Jewish people? It answers that *Midbar Sinai* refers to the Torah and *Ohel Moed* is the *Mishkan*. Later in its comments on the parsha, the Zohar says that there were two counts, a count of the soldiers of the Torah and a count of the soldiers of the *Mishkan*. What do these counts refer to?

The Shem MiShmuel explains that the Jewish people, who are the troops of Torah, and the Leviim, who are the troops of the *Mishkan*, were counted separately. However, the Zohar writes that both were counted concurrently. The two counts share a common theme. What is the Zohar trying to teach us with this focus on Torah and *Mishkan*?

The Mishna in Avot says, "The world stands on three pillars: Torah, service of Hashem, and kind deeds." Torah, intellectual study, is the focus of the mind, while *avoda*, serving Hashem through *korbanot* or prayer, is connected to the heart and emotion.

What was the purpose of the Jewish people's sojourn in the desert for forty years? The Zohar writes that the desert is the most barren place in the world and represents the physical place that manifests the evil powers of the higher realms. According to Kabbala, the Jews were meant to conquer and subjugate these evil forces, and they succeeded with the strength of Torah.

The Torah was specifically given in the *satan's* backyard, to teach us that the power of Torah is so great that it can produce holiness in the worst places. The Jews are called soldiers of Torah because they are enjoined to fight against a terrible, difficult environment.

In contrast, the Zohar says that the *Mishkan* was not exposed to the desert. It was surrounded and kept protected within the Jewish camp. The Shem MiShmuel explains that this is the difference between Torah and *avoda*. Torah, a function of the brain, is strong, hard, and clear and cannot be impacted by any outside influences. It has the power to overcome the desert. However, *avoda*, which is connected to the heart, is delicate, sensitive, and unstable. For the heart to remain pure and holy, it has to remain in a protected environment.

This was the difference between the two units of soldiers. The troops of Torah marched publicly in the hostile desert, while the troops of *avoda* stayed protected within the *Mishkan* so they could serve Hashem in purity.

The Shem MiShmuel writes that although the Torah generally shuns publicity, the Jews were counted openly. This was to teach us that one can only confront evil in public battle. In contrast, the Leviim, who represented service of Hashem, needed protection within the Jewish camp.

Every Jew is a miniature of the Jewish nation. What is true for the general people is true for the individual as well. We are all a combination of heart and mind. Our strength is Torah and *avoda*. Torah study should be done publicly while *avoda* should be private and personal. The Shem MiShmuel teaches that just as the eleven tribes were counted before the Leviim, our first priority should be Torah study. Once we have developed our Torah, we can then reach a level of serving Hashem with a pure heart.

We are living in very challenging times. Let us tap into the power of Torah to defeat the evil forces around us. Then we will be able to serve Hashem with a full and pure heart.

Achieving Balance: Class #3

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

Question:

Before I was married I used to love studying Torah. Learning uplifted me tremendously. Now I would rather wash dishes than listen to a d'var Torah. I sit down to learn only when my husband asks me to learn with him and I'm eager to finish. I even tune out when I hear speakers. Is this normal? Is it a *yerida*? Do you have any suggestions for how to move in the right direction?

Answer:

There's absolutely no essential reason for women to learn Torah for the sake of learning alone. For women, Torah is a means to an end. The end is developing a relationship with Hashem, oneself, and other people on Hashem's terms. To accomplish this, you have to know the rules of the

game, which is what learning is for. You also have to have a repository of inspiration that will keep you in a state of ahava, yira, and deveikut.

Think of it as flight school. Once you're behind the wheel in the cockpit, you have to do your job. There is no more time to learn. Before you were married you learned. Now you're actualizing what you've studied.

I don't know where you are in life. I'm imagining you must be a busy mother with young children, a demanding job, and little extra time. You're taking the Torah you know and putting it into action. Don't feel guilty. You are where you should be. Still, there's a minimum you have to maintain. Study a

halacha a day from a sefer or through Dial-A-Shiur. Stay inspired by reading a book, listening to a cassette, or just going back to the repository you have from your seminary days and bringing it into your life.

There may be women who require more intense learning to stay inspired. For them, delving into sifrei mussar or chassidut is their lifeline. It helps them come alive, rekindling their ahava and yirat Hashem, and revitalizes their davening. For them, setting aside more significant blocks of time for in-depth learning may be essential for their avodat Hashem. They are not you. You're fulfilling your mission; you're on the right path.



Shavuot: Naaseh v'nishma

Based on a Naaleh.com Shiur by Rabbi Beinish Ginsburg

The Gemara in Shabbat writes that when the Jewish nation said *naaseh v'nishma* at Har Sinai, six hundred thousand angels placed two crowns each on every Jew's head, one for *naaseh* and one for *nishma*. A critical aspect of *kabbalat ha'Torah* was captured within these two words.

Every year, on Shavuot we relive *Matan Torah*. As Shavuot draws near we re-experience the *naaseh v'nishma* of Klal Yisrael. How do we understand it? There are three approaches.

The Rishonim say that the greatness of *naaseh v'nishma* was our blind faith. We assured Hashem that we would do whatever He commanded of us even before we knew or heard what it was. Rashi explains that the magnitude of *naaseh v'nishma* was that we accepted the *mitzvot* before we knew how difficult they would be.

The Mishna in Avot writes, "One whose deeds are greater than his wisdom, his wisdom will be retained." How can a

person's actions be greater than his wisdom? If one does not know, how can he act? Rabbeinu Yonah explains that if a person accepts upon himself to do whatever he is later commanded to do, he receives reward as if he did the actual deed. He then receives reward again when he does the *mitzva*. Therefore, it is possible to have more deeds than wisdom. This is the meaning of *naaseh v'nishma*. We received reward for all the *mitzvot* we would later do.

The Maharsha offers another explanation. The Jews consented to do the *mitzvot* before they understood the rationale behind them. First they said *naaseh*, we will do the *mitzvot*, and then *nishma*, we will study the reasons for them. Rav Aaron Soloveitchik notes that the word *taam* has two meanings: reason and flavor. This teaches us that the reasons for the *mitzvot* are not their true essence but rather add flavor and desire for the *mitzva*.

The Maharal explains a third approach. A

person's Torah learning must match his living of Torah. It is not enough to study the Torah, one must apply it to actual life. That is why the students of Rabbi Akiva died. Although they were great in Torah, their *middot* were flawed.

The Maharal asks, why were the two crowns given by one angel and then later taken away by two angels? He explains that *naaseh v'nishma*, learning and doing, are really one unit. Since an angel can only accomplish one mission, one angel was able to give one crown. However when the Jewish nation sinned, they split *Naaseh* from *nishma*. Two angels were then needed to remove them.

This is the lesson of *naaseh v'nishma*. We need to ask ourselves, "Does my personal life reflect my Torah learning?" Shavuot night is not just about studying Torah, it is about committing yourself to keep it so that your learning and living become one. May we merit to reach this lofty goal.

Bringing Torah To Life #11-Relating To Torah Leaders

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Children from ages three to six are more verbal and can begin to understand. This is a great age to plant the seeds of *emunat chachamim*. Simple *tzaddik* stories are an excellent medium. Many of the children's books for this age have the same plot: A family is faced with an insurmountable challenge, the wife suggest that the husband go to the *tzaddik* for help, at which point the *tzaddik* usually saves the day. Let them hear these stories again and again. I recommend the Sharsheret and Machanyim series. Choose books with beautiful pictures. For young children, words are less important than images as pictures have the power to plant a seed in a child's heart. Talk to them about the *tzaddikim* photos in your living room. Tell them about the Steipler's dedication to Torah and about the Chofetz Chaim's *Ahavat Yisrael*. You may know different Rebbe stories but be sure to keep these stories simple. Don't tell them stories with ten subplots as they will get wrapped up in the drama of the tale and forget about the hero. Help them

understand that *tzaddikim* are not just people who live good lives but that they also benefit us. Relate stories of people who received a blessing from a *tzaddik* or who went to *kivrei tzaddim* and were saved. Kids should know that *tzaddikim* are actual people. Therefore, make an effort to take them occasionally to a *tzaddik* so that it becomes real to them.

Children from ages seven to eleven can graduate from hearing tales about *tzaddikim* to actually seeing you ask advice from a Rav or a *tzaddik*. They should hear you say, "I don't know," and watch you phone a Rav for guidance. If possible, taking a child along with you to a Rav and seeing you ask is very important. Additionally, watching you consult sefarim is good for kids. At this age, they may hear *chilul Hashem* stories and come to you for explanation. There are several ways to deal with this. The first approach is to investigate if the story is actually true. If there is a reasonable doubt about the veracity of the scandal protect your child by not talking about the story but about the

people who made up the story. Tell them, "Just because someone told you this does not make it true. People say these things when they're jealous. Maybe someone was envious of the Rav." If the scandal is true, you could say, "Everyone makes mistakes." Explain to your child that people in desperate situations can sometimes make terrible errors and then regret it and change. Talk about the child's past mistakes and your mistakes. Tell him that you are sure the Rav has already repented or will eventually do *teshuva*. When the scandal is not only true but the child himself was victimized, you are walking on very thin ice. This is because if you make the Rabbi the hero, the child becomes the villain subconsciously. Therefore, you need to tell him another kind of story, like the story of Korach. Talk about the *tzaddik* who could have been holy but made an awful mistake because his ambitions blinded him. He made other people suffer and in the end Hashem punished him.

Support our website and Torah learning, one purchase at a time. Apply for the Naaleh Credit Card, visit Naaleh.com for more info.



Shavuot: Accepting The Torah – Between Man and Man #8

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The Ten Commandments were presented on two sides of the tablets of the law to teach us that the laws between man and Hashem and between man and man have a certain equality.

The first of the commandments between man and man is “*Lo tirtzach*,” the prohibition of murder. According to halacha, murder is defined as premeditated killing out of hatred. The outcome does not render an act as murder, but the intention.

Our Sages compare humiliating someone to murder. The Maharal explains that humiliation belittles a person’s divinity. The person ceases to see his own spirituality and significance. Similarly, causing someone to be killed, even if the person was destined die anyway, denigrates the value of life.

Additionally, a person needs to realize that his own life is precious. The Orchof Tzadikim writes that a person who does not value his life and dies as a consequence of his own negligence is more guilty than a murderer. Life is too precious to waste. On the other hand, saving a life is like saving the whole world, because the universe is more whole with that person’s divine image.

Giving people a sense of significance is also giving them life. Being with a person in their time of brokenness, visiting the sick, comforting a mourner, and validating the good qualities in others, are ways of increasing the Divine light in this world. “*Lo tirtzach*” parallels “*Anochi Hashem*.” This is because affirming someone’s spirituality is akin to acknowledging Hashem.

The second commandment is “*Lo tinaf*,” the prohibition of adultery. According to the Torah, a whole human being consists of man and woman together. Man’s inborn desire is to provide. He does this by drawing down good and giving it to the woman who turns it into something of significance. A woman’s innate need is to be valued. We have to ask ourselves which identity we want to project, our body or our soul. This, in effect, determines what one will wear. Clothing is a statement to the world how you want to be perceived. “*Lo tinaf*” parallels the commandment not to have other gods. Destroying the bond that makes one human, the bond between man and woman, is akin to idol worship.

The third commandment is “*Lo tignov*,” the prohibition of kidnapping. Halachically, this is defined as taking someone against his will and holding him for ransom. Kidnapping reduces someone to a piece of merchandise, where one fails to see the Divine spark within the person. It parallels the commandment of “*Lo tisa*,” not uttering Hashem’s name in vain, because there is no way in which we find Hashem more readily than through recognizing the Divinity in a human being.

The fourth commandment is “*Lo Taane*,” the prohibition of false testimony. This parallels the commandment of Shabbat. Shabbat is about stepping out of the picture in order to see the full picture. We cannot appreciate life if we never step out to see the Creator and the beauty of His world. Similarly, truth is so crucially important that if a person

cannot at least trust his own words, he is completely lost.

The last commandment is “*Lo tachmod*,” the prohibition of coveting. There are two types of coveting. Sometimes people want something because others have it, not because they necessarily need it. Constant desire for self affirmation from the outside dooms one to jealousy, because a person will always find something that someone else has that he does not. The worst kind of coveting is thinking, “You have it, I want it and since I can’t have it, I don’t want you to have it either.”

How does one uproot envy from his personality? The Ibn Ezra explains that just as it is clear to the country peasant that he will never marry the princess, we need to realize that we are all unique and are given exactly what we need to achieve our own specific mission in life.

This parallels honoring ones parents because both involve seeing Hashem’s providence. The parents you were given were tailor made for you just as the objects you have were specifically meant for you.

The Ten Commandments are so huge in scope that our Sages tells us that the whole Torah comes from them. When Shavuot comes, the main thought we need to bear in mind is to work to make the Torah a part of us. By saying *naaseh v’nishma* sincerely in our hearts, we not only commit ourselves to learn, but to do and to make it part of ourselves, because this is the most important endeavor we can ever strive for.

Shavuot

Based on a Naaleh.com Short Vort by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The only festival that has a Torah mandated period of preparation is Shavuot. Blowing the shofar in Elul is a rabbinic obligation, and cleaning for Pesach has no set time. However, the 49 day sefira count and the shloshet yemei hagbalah (the three day preparation) always precede the yom tov of Shavuot. Why does Shavuot need such intense preparation?

According to Chassidic teaching, Shavuot is a day of judgment akin to Rosh Hashana.

On Rosh Hashana we are judged for what will happen to us physically, while on Shavuot our spiritual potential is decided. All of our spiritual moments, feelings of inspiration, and our level of kavana in prayer, Torah study, and mitzvot during the coming year are determined on this day. We know that the real, internal aspect of life is our soul. We need to make sure that we are worthy to attain these eternal spiritual levels. Therefore, the Torah demands major

preparation before Shavuot so we will be ready to be judged favorably on this holy day.

May we merit that Hashem give us a year where we can feel connected during the spiritual moments in our life. May we be zoche during this sefira period to take the key component of self, our soul, and develop it to its fullest, so that we can then be inscribed in the sefer hachaim-the true spiritual life.

Support our website and Torah learning, one purchase at a time. Apply for the Naaleh Credit Card, visit Naaleh.com for more info.