



**TORAH ACADEMY**  
of Bergen County

# קול תורה

**Parashat BeMidbar**

**3 Sivan 5781**

**May 14, 2021**

**Vol. 30 No. 36**

## The Power of Mesorah

*By Nachi Scheiner ('22)*

Familial bonds are the core of Judaism's success. The word "Mesorah" denotes the passing of the torch of Torah from one generation to the next. Every day in Shema we read, "VeShinantam LeVanecha," "and you shall teach your son" (Devarim 6:7). Shema is meant to remind us of the obligation we have to the Torah, Mitzvot and most importantly, Hashem. In the mix of Judaic essentials, we must mention the obligation of not only doing the Mitzvot ourselves, but inspiring our children and in turn our grandchildren, great grandchildren, and on. One cannot stress the importance that the familial relationship plays in Judaism enough.

In Parashat BeMidbar, the Pasuk says, "VaYityaldu Al Mishpechotam LeVeit Avotam" (BeMidbar 1:18). Rashi on that Pasuk states that when Bnei Yisrael were counted, they would bring their Sifrei Yichusim, genealogical and other forms of records in order to trace which Sheivet they were from. Many Mefarshim ask, Why was it necessary to do this? Imagine if the American census required a DNA tracing done before: then even more people wouldn't do it!

Based on a Pasuk in Yirmiyahu, the Tzeidah LaDerech explains that when Hashem rests his Shechinah upon Bnei Yisrael, he only does it upon families with genealogical proof of being part of Bnei Yisrael. Bnei Yisrael were entering the period where Hashem's Shechinah would rest upon the Mishkan, and they now need to be counted along with their family records. Another instance when Hashem's Shechinah rested upon us was at Har Sinai. The nations of the world came to Hashem and said, what makes Bnei Yisrael deserving of this great honor? Hashem quieted them down by saying they bring me their Sifrei Yichusim. Rabbi George Silfen connects these two points and says that right before Shavu'ot, we read sefer BeMidbar, where we each bring our own Sefer Yichusim in order to be fit to accept the Torah and have Hashem come even closer to us. However, one is still left with

an urgent question: What is so special about Bnei Yisrael's Sefer Yichusim?

The Sefat Emet on the phrase "LeVeit Avotam" (ad. loc.) asks, What does this phrase mean and what is it coming to teach us? He answers that even though Bnei Yisrael grew from a mere seventy people to over six hundred thousand, familial connections still remained intact. There is a phrase that a person should always ask himself: When will my actions reach those of the forefathers? How can one demand of himself, though, that he reach the level of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov? The Chidushei HaRim explains that it isn't that one must reach the level of the great forefathers, rather that one should feel a connection to their ways and actions. Rav Chaim Volozhin explains the well known concept Maaseh Avot Siman LaBanim, the ways of the father affect the future of the next generation.

Hashem's message to us is that what makes you, Bnei Yisrael, so special and deserving of my Shechinah is not merely which Sheivet you are from, but the Mesorah you received. The Sefer Ta'am VeDa'at says that when one generation makes the ultimate sacrifice for Hashem and his Torah, inevitably it has a profound effect on the next generation. Hashem wants to see the connection we have to the older generation even as far back as our forefathers. Rabbi Michael Hoenig's grandfather served as a loyal US soldier in WWII. Despite the horrid conditions of warfare and the scarce food, he refused to eat non-kosher meats. His diet was extremely impacted, but so was his spirituality, since he was able to sacrifice his diet in order to be Shomer Mitzvot. His diet was a temporary issue, however, whereas his spirituality has had an effect on his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Rabbi Hoenig is an extremely successful Rav loved and appreciated by many. The sacrifice his grandfather made is the epitome of bringing the Sefer Yichusim in front of Hashem and showing how we are fit to receive the Torah this Shavuot.

## Between BeMidbar and Shavuot

*By Daniel Grin ('22)*

Most years, we read Parashat BeMidbar on the Shabbat preceding Shavuot. What is the connection between the Parashah and the Yom Tov? The Gemara in Megillah first explains the reason for doing this every year. The first reason is that there is a Tochachah in Parashat BeChukotai, so we read it after this Tochachah. The Gemara also explains the

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reasoning for why we read a Tochachah before Rosh HaShanah in Parashat Ki Tavo. The reason is that we want to put the curses behind us and be able to move forward with a clean slate with a year full of Berachot and promise. This Gemara actually says that not only is Rosh HaShanah a “new start” but also that Shavuot is a type of “Rosh HaShanah”. Tosafot pose the obvious question: Why then do we read Parashat BeMidbar before Shavuot? Shouldn't we just read Parashat BeChukotai and then celebrate Shavuot? Similarly, later in the year at Rosh HaShanah, Ki Tavo is not the Parashah preceding Rosh HaShanah. There is Parashat Nitzavim between them! Tosafot answer that we need a full week buffer between the Tochachah and the following Yom Tov.

Another explanation highlights the connection between Parashat BeMidbar and Shavuot. The additional Parashah is not just a buffer, but it leads us on the journey to Har Sinai into Kabbalat HaTorah. The Midrash explains that Hashem offered the Torah to all the nations. When each nation inquired about the details about the Torah, Hashem shared with them a Mitzvah that went against their nature. For example, the nation of Edom was told the prohibition of murder which they immediately refused to accept. Hashem repeated this process for each of the other nations. The Sefat Emet asks, What Mitzvah challenges the nature of Jews? The Klei Chemdah in Parashat BeShalach explains that we were told the rules of Shloshet Yemei Hagbalah - the three days of separation prior to Kabbalat HaTorah. The Klei Chemdah explains that the nature of a Jew is to research and inspect every matter no matter what subject. For example, when studying Gemara, we look to find all the small details and learn everything we can about the small details. This nature tempts us to overstep our boundary and may cause us to gossip. Similarly, the Gemara in Yevamot describes that Na'omi taught Rut the Halachot of Techum Shabbat. Why does Naomi emphasize this Halacha? The Klei Chemdah explains that we each have to achieve our own goals and not to be concerned about others and their lives. Techum Shabbat teaches people to stay within their boundary and not worry about other people. This is the whole essence of Parashat BeMidbar. This is a book of numbers where every number counts, every individual lives in their own world, and every individual has worth. We each have our own path and unique joinery to Har Sinai. We are a part of a nation; we are all together, but we each serve a different role in the Jewish people. There are 248 positive Mitzvot in the Torah corresponding to the 248 limbs of the body. Each of us represent a different limb and different body part. This is why the Gematriya of the word “BeMidbar” is 248, because as we lead to Kabbalat HaTorah, we each have our own path within the framework of Torah. As we

approach the three days up until Kabbalat HaTorah, we need to be reminded that we each have unique and individual abilities as part of the Tzibbur.

## Influence Others to Learn Torah

*By Yavov Abrahams ('22)*

Adapted from *Growth Through Torah* by Zelig Pliskin

When describing the arrangement of Bnei Yisrael's camp, the Torah introduces Shevet Zevulun as “*Mateh Zevulun*,” “The tribe of Zevulun” (BeMidbar 2:7).

The Ba'al HaTurim teaches that in regards to certain tribes that are notably together in the Torah, the Torah adds the letter “Vav” to teach that they are separate Shevatim but still unified. He notes that specifically by Zevulun, there is no “Vav” attached to the name. This is because the tribe of Yissachar, which is mentioned right before Zevulun, devoted themselves to Torah study day and night, while Zevulun supported them financially. Because Zevulun enables Yissachar to learn Torah, their tribes are counted as one, and Zevulun shares in Yissachar's reward for their Torah study.

Says Rav Chaim Shmulevitz in *Sichos Mussar*, that just as someone who supports another financially, enabling that person to toil in Torah, shares in the reward, so too anyone who encourages another to learn Torah receives a share in the reward of that person. Every Yeshiva student, therefore, has many opportunities to be a positive influence on others.

Influencing others to learn Torah doesn't necessarily require going around convincing your friends to give learning a try. One can lead by example by frequently studying diligently. Others will see the sheer Simchah that the diligent student gains from learning Torah and in effect will increase their own Torah study. In serving as a role model Ben Torah to his classmates, the diligent student will share in the merits of the Torah learning that he inspired in his peers.

Parents who influence and encourage their children to learn will so too share in the merits of the Torah that is learned. Additionally, wives who allow their husbands to study will share in their merits. In any case, in order for Torah to be learned, some will inevitably have to sacrifice, but in the end, all who do are destined to rejoice in their well deserved merits.

## Lander's Model Beis Din 5781/2021 – Priorities in Covid-19 Vaccine Distribution Part 1

*By Rabbi Howard Jachter*

BeChasdei Hashem, great progress has been made developing Covid-19 vaccines. Distribution has begun worldwide, albeit on a limited basis in many locales. Protocols



(Deuteronomy 1:17). **Reish Lakish says:** This teaches **that the judgment of one *peruta* should be as dear**, i.e., important, **to you as the judgment of one hundred *maneh***, i.e., ten thousand dinars. The Gemara asks: **With regard to what *halakha* is this said? If we say** it is with regard to the need **to study it carefully and to decide** the case justly, it is **obvious** that even cases relating to small sums must be judged thoroughly. **Rather**, Reish Lakish was speaking with regard **to giving it precedence:** The small claims case may not be deferred in favor of the larger claim merely because the disputed sum is smaller.

We should note, though, that the Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 15:1) writes that the case involving a Talmid Chacham as a litigant enjoys top priority even if he arrived last. It is possible that this is an example of following the aforementioned Gemara from Sanhedrin 32b that the burdened ship enjoys priority over the unburdened ship.

5) The Halacha assigns priorities in allocating limited financial resources to Tzedaka:

Rambam Hilchot Anayim Perek 8:

A woman takes precedence over a man for feeding, clothing, and bringing out of prison, because it is more usual for men to go door to door [to beg] and not for a woman who feels great shame in this. But if both of them [a man and a woman] were in captivity and were in danger of being violated sexually, the man takes precedence for redemption, because this is not the way of things.

TABC Talmidim Tzvi Meister and Yossi Sherman suggest that women might enjoy priority in certain sections of the Jewish community, since many women in these communities are more hesitant to take the vaccine due to unfounded rumors of it contributing to infertility. This hesitancy might be viewed as creating a greater vulnerability, and thus priority in receiving the vaccine.

In the case of a male orphan and a female orphan who come [to the authorities of the community] to get married [but not to each other], the female [orphan] takes precedence over the man, because she feels great shame in this. And they may not give her less than the worth of six and a quarter *dinar* of pure silver, and if they have more in the bank of *tzedakah*, they give to her according to her honor.

If we have before us many poor people or many captives, and there is not enough in the fund to sustain them, or to clothe them, or to redeem them all, a priest takes precedence over a Levite, a Levite over a [regular] Jew, a Jew over a *chalel* [an illegitimate child of a priest], a *chalel* over a *shetuki* [an illegitimate child with an unknown father], a *shetuki* over a *asufi* [a foundling], an *asufi* over a *mamzer* [a child who was conceived in a union forbidden by the Torah], a *mamzer* over a *natin* [a descendent of the Gibeonites], and a *natin* over a stranger, so long as the *natin* was praised with us in holiness, and a convert takes precedence over a freed slave, for he [the slave] was once one of the cursed.

To what does this refer? When both who are imprisoned are equal in wisdom. But if there was a High Priest who was an ignoramus and a *mamzer* who was a wise disciple, the wise disciple takes precedence. Anyone who is great in wisdom takes precedence over another. But if one of them [the captives] was one's rabbi or father, even if there is someone who is greater in wisdom, one's rabbi or father [takes precedence]. Even if there is someone there [among the captives] who is greater in wisdom than his rabbi or his father, so long as he [his father or rabbi] is a wise disciple, he [the father or the rabbi] takes precedence over the one who is greater than them in wisdom.

TABC Talmid Yossi Sherman notes that the last point shows that knowledge and usefulness to society enjoys much higher priority than one's status.

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Questions, comments? Contact us at:

*Kol Torah*

*c/o Torah Academy of Bergen County*

*1600 Queen Anne Road*

*Teaneck, NJ 07666*

*Phone: (201) 837-7696*

*koltorah@koltorah.org*