

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman

פרשת במדבר

ואתה הפקד את הלויים על משכן העדת ועל כל כליו ועל כל אשר לו המה ישאו את המשכן ואת כל כליו והם ישרתהו וסביב למשכן יחנו

“Now you, appoint the Levites over the Tabernacle of the Testimony, over all of its utensils and over everything that belongs to it. They shall carry the Tabernacle and all its utensils and they shall minister to it; and they shall encamp around the Tabernacle” (1:50)

Rabbeinu Bachya cites a midrash in connection with this posuk: Anyone who brings himself a little bit closer to Hashem, Hashem will enable him to become much closer than he could have on his own. We learn this principle from the tribe of Levi. They came close to Hashem by volunteering to defend His honor after the golden calf and Hashem brought them closer to Him by making them the ministers and officials in his sanctuary. They were responsible for setting up the Mishkan and transporting it. They were to forever be in Hashem’s inner circle because of one act. Why? Because they made a move to become close to Hashem. When a person makes that effort, Hashem brings him even closer. It is upon us to take that first step, even with a small action, so that we can merit to this special help from Hashem. The midrash teaches that this idea applies for all time and that a one-time action can have far-reaching effects.

We also find the importance of an initial action on our own later on in the parsha. Hashem instructed Moshe to count all Leviyim from the age of one month and up. However, Moshe balked at the idea of entering each home to check how many babies were there because it would be inappropriate to enter the mother’s private chambers. Rashi writes that Hashem told Moshe: “You do what you need to do and I will do my part.” Moshe went to the door of each tent and a heavenly voice told him how many inhabitants there were inside. If Hashem was already assisting him, why did Moshe even need to go to the tents in the first place? The answer is a person has to do as much as he can do and then Hashem will complete the rest. Nothing happens by itself without any effort on our part.

איש על דגלו באתת לבית אבתם יחנו בני ישראל מנגד סביב לאהל מועד יחנו
“The Children of Israel shall encamp, each man by his flag according to the insignias of their fathers’ households, at a distance surrounding the Tent of Meeting shall they encamp” (2:2)

Every tribe had a flag of its own whose color matched that of their stone on the choshen. These different flags, each with their unique emblems, showed how all Jews are different, with different strengths and abilities. The different flags for each tribe emphasized their differences, but the greatness was that these differences were united to serve Hashem. Every person has to know what his job in life is. It might be different than that which is expected of someone else, but together we form one Klal Yisrael, working hand in hand to serve Hashem.

ומטה גד ונשיא לבני גד אליסף בן רעואל
“And the tribe of Gad – and the leader of the children of Gad is Eliasaf son of Reuel” (2:14)

In the first perek, Eliasaf’s father is called Deuel and in the second perek he is called Reuel. What is the reason behind these two names? The sefer Birkas Ish answers that when Moshe blessed Gad before his death, he praised the tribe (according to Rashi in Vezos Haberacha) for choosing their territory because it was the place where Moshe Rabbeinu would be buried. Why was it specifically Gad who wanted this? The father of their leader was Deuel, which means “he who knows Hashem.” This was his focus in life. One of the ways in which he taught the importance of knowing Hashem was through the value of being close to Torah scholars. This emphasis on building relationships with talmidei chachamim made him Reuel, meaning “friend of Hashem.” When one greets a talmid chacham, Chazal tell us it is if he greets the Shechina. When one develops a relationship with a talmid chacham, he becomes a friend of Hashem. The tribe of Gad accepted the message which their leader had learned from his father and chose their portion of land accordingly.

*Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman
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