Points to Ponder

Bamibar 5782

**בְּמִדְבַּ֥ר סִינַ֖י  In the Midbar Sinai (1:1)** - Sefer Bamidbar deals with the life of Bnei Yisrael in the Midbar. We tend to think of this experience as a b’dieved, a punishment for the cheit hamergalim, and if not for that, it would have been a short experience. The **Meshech Chochma** gives us a different perspective. The forty years were a preparation for entering Eretz Yisrael. That generation needed a spiritual infusion before they can live a life of Torah while dealing with the challenges of living a life al derech hateva.

**אִ֥ישׁ אִ֖ישׁ לַמַּטֶּ֑ה Each man a leader of his Shevet (1:4)** - Why does the Torah seem to imply that the installation of the tribal leaders only took place at this time when they had already been serving in their roles for at least seven months? The **Netziv** explains that until this point, the tribal heads were decided on by each shevet, not by Hashem, and it was in this capacity that they contributed to the construction and dedication of the Mishkan. In Parshas Bamidbar, this situation appeared ripe for change, as Hashem told Moshe that He would formally designate a chief for each tribe. This may have caused anxiety among the men who would lose their jobs and the people who may see their desired nasi replaced, but to their surprise, each of the 12 tribal heads that Hashem announced was the same one the Jewish people had chosen on their own. This teaches us that we have a natural ability to select the correct leaders.

**אִ֧ישׁ עַל־מַֽחֲנֵ֛הוּ וְאִ֥ישׁ עַל־דִּגְל֖וֹ  Each under his banner (1:52)** - Why did it take a whole year for Hashem to assign degalim for Bnei Yisrael? Why didn’t they do so immediately after leaving Mitzrayim? **Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky ztl.** suggests that the degalim represent the diversity of klal Yisrael. Each shevet has its own unique traits. This has the potential to cause people from different shevatim to grow apart from one another. As such, HaShem waited until there was a Mishkan set up. The Mishkan serves as a hub to unify all of Klal Yisrael.

**אִ֣ישׁ עַל־דִּגְל֤וֹ בְאֹתֹת֙** **Each according to his flag (2:2)** - The Dor Hamidbar led a miraculous life. Things were fairly simple. Yet the Torah has such rigorous instructions for how they moved through the desert. Why is this so? **Rav Aharon Kotler ztl.** says that the reason for degalim is to teach future generations that organization is a key to life.

**כִּ֣י לִי֘ כָּל־בְּכוֹר֒ בְּיוֹם֩ הַכֹּתִ֨י כָל־בְּכ֜וֹר בְּאֶ֣רֶץ מִצְרַ֗יִם For all the Bechorim are mine (3:13)** - The Torah tells us that the sanctity of the Bechor is special since Hashem saved the Bechorim in Mitzrayim. However, what about the Bechor born in the Midbar? Why is HE uniquely Kadosh? He was not sanctified at the time of Makas Bechoros? **Rav Elya Svei ztl.** explained that when a Bechor is born, he is born with the ability to understand more. Hence more is expected of him. The Bechor relates to the miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim better than other children for he can relate to the unique situation he would have been in as a Bechor in Egypt. Hence, he can sense Hashem’s Chessed better which in turn brings him more Kedusha and creating the opportunity for the Mitzva of Pidyon. More awareness means greater responsibility.

**מִשְׁפְּחֹ֥ת בְּנֵֽי־קְהָ֖ת יַֽחֲנ֑וּ עַ֛ל יֶ֥רֶךְ הַמִּשְׁכָּ֖ן תֵּימָֽנָה: And those camped (2:29)** - The Midrash on our parsha, commenting on the proximity of Kehas to Shevet Reuvein, refers us to the Mishna that reminds us oy l’rasha, oy l’shcheino. How could it be that by following God’s orders of where to camp it resulted in death to members of their tribe?  If God Himself tells you to buy a certain house, implicitly expressing that is the best place for you, wouldn’t you assume He wasn’t setting you up for tragedy? **Rav Nebenzahl Shlita** suggests that even if hashgacha seems to have placed us somewhere, we must never let down our guard from negative influences in our environment.  We may never become apathetic, indifferent or unaware of the harmful pressures that constantly lurk wherever we may find ourselves.  God never gave Reuvein a license to stop thinking, to cease being cautious and acting judiciously.   God is not to blame for Reuvein’s losses in the episode with Korach.  Reuvein is to blame for not being vigilant in not allowing a toxic neighbor to influence them.  Reuvein should have been aware that his environment could impact him.

**אַל־תַּכְרִ֕יתוּ אֶת־שֵׁ֖בֶט מִשְׁפְּחֹ֣ת הַקְּהָתִ֑י Do not cut off the Shevet Kehas (4:18)** - HaShem tells Moshe that we should not allow the Kehasim to be cut off. The midrash explains that the Kehasim all wanted to carry the Aron and not the rest of keilim. This wasn’t only a bizayon to the keilim, it also caused fighting among the Kehasim. **Rav Pam ztl.** quotes Ramchal that sometimes it looks like we are performing a mitzvah, but because we don’t think about the consequences, we are performing an aveirah.

**Haftara**

**וְאֵֽרַשְׂתִּ֥יךְ לִ֖י לְעוֹלָ֑ם And I will be betrothed to thee forever (Hoshea 2:21)** - Why would we want to remain betrothed to God forever? Isn’t it better to move to a stronger relationship, that of Nesuin? **Rav Schachter, Shlita**, quoting the Gemara (Yoma 54a) that notes that the relationship between the Jewish People and God fluctuates between an erusin and a nissuin state. We move from erusin, to nissuin, and, at times, without a get, back to erusin, something humans cannot do in their marriages. Thus, we are not being cursed by Hoshea to *always remain* arusot. The Jewish people have, and will, be fully married to God. Instead, we are assured that we will never be *less* that arusot, even at times of churban. **Rav Avraham Rivlin Shlita** takes a different approach suggesting that it is not that we will not reach the stage of nissuin, but that we must always maintain the excitement of erusin. God promises us that His relationship with us will never grow stale.