

In the Desert (1:1) – Why wasn't the Torah given in Eretz Yisrael? The Midrash suggests that Hashem wanted us to know that the Torah applies everywhere all the time. Additionally, the Midrash suggests that if the Torah was given in Eretz Yisrael it would have been assumed that a particular Shevet would own Torah. By offering it in the Midbar, it opened the Torah up to freedom from personal corruption from all sides. Why was this not done in Yirushalayim? The Soloveitchik family suggest that the concept of Yirushalayim not being divided means for ownership issues but not for actual division. **Rav Schachter Shlita** quoted the **Netziv** who cited the Chazal that Moshe was given the Torah to keep it but he was kind and shared it with the people. When did this happen? The **Netziv** suggests that it was when Be'er Es HaTorah. But how was this? After all, that point the people were in Eiver HaYarden – IN SOMEONE'S CHEILEK?! **Netziv** answers that when Reuven rejected a portion of the land and Dan hadn't risen to claim it, Moshe transferred the Torah at that time.

In the Midbar (1:1) – The Tur notes that we always read Parshas BaMidbar before Shavuos. Chazal cite 2 reasons why. The first is that one who is studying Torah should make himself into a Midbar that everyone walks through and the second is that Torah is free like the sand in the desert. **The Lubavitcher Rebbe ztl.** explained that when one studies Torah one can be successful only if Nafshee K'Afa L'Kol Tiheyeh – only then can there be a Pisach Leebee B'Toraseicha. This is a Gavra related issue. The free Torah is more of a Cheftza related issue that one needs to see the Torah as ownerless and that one can easily be Zoche simply by making a Kinyan on it – thereby “owning” his piece in it. These are 2 critical factors in Torah – to properly have a Kabbalas HaTorah one needs to make the Torah his and that one makes Torah his, by being Battel to it.

And the Jewish people should encamp each person on his encampment and by his flag (1:52) – What is the intent of the double language (which we also find in Zemiro – Ish Al MachaneiHu V'Ish Al Diglo)? **Rabbi Bernard Weinberger Shlita** noted that the encampment sets a person's role – one knows his place when he sees his flag. He is grounded and can move forward with a life plan that is individual specific. But at the same time, one needs the energy and inspiration to know that he has so much more that he can achieve in life – the flag flying overhead reminds a person that he should set his sights high above – like the flag that flies in the air – giving a person a means to strive and a location to begin. (Shabbos is similar – keeping it both grounds us in time and place and gives us a transcendence over the world to have bigger things in mind for ourselves and our relationship with Hashem.)

And the Leviim shall camp around the Mishkan and there will be no anger on the Jewish people (1:53) – **Ramban** notes that this Mitzva applies even in the future – in the Beis HaMikdash as it is the source of the Mishmaros – that the Leviim would guard the outside of the Beis HaMikdash. **Rav Nosson Meir Wachtfogel ztl.** explained that this guarding even led to an episode where a guard fell asleep and was punished accordingly. Why did Hashem need the guards? **Rav Nosson Meir** explained that Hashem wanted to show his people that even a second of break from D'veikus from his chosen agents caused a strain in the relationship. This could not be allowed.

These are the offspring of Moshe & Aharon (3:1) – **Rashi** notes that that one who teaches his friend's children Torah is considered as if he birthed him. Thus, Aharon's children are considered Moshe's in these Possukim. **Rav Wolbe ztl.** noted that in order for one to impact a Talmid positively, one must care for him as one cares for his own flesh and blood. If one wants to gain from a mentor, one must trust that person like one trusts a father or mother.

And God spoke to Moshe saying, Bring the tribe of Levi near, and present them before Aharon the Kohen that they may serve him." (Bamidbar 3:5-6)- The **Rambam** (Hil. Kli HaMikdash 3:1) rules that the Levite service is not up to the Levi's choice. Whether he wishes to serve or not, he is obligated to do so and he is forced to perform it. **Rav Amital ztl.** explained that this coercion has a function and purpose: the inculcation of the concept of discipline and coercion in Divine service. Through this command to the Levites, who symbolize the entire nation, the rest of the nation observes and learns the importance of this concept. (A similar idea is found at Har Sinai where we read about Kafa Aleihem Har K'Gigit which ironically is balanced with the overt story of the Jewish response of Naaseh V'Nishma). The Rambam, in Moreh Nevukhim, teaches that the mitzvos can be explained only in a general sense, and that a person who seeks to understand the reason for every detail of the mitzvos is foolish. What we have said above helps us to understand why this is true: If every detail of every mitzva had a reason which we knew and understood, then the aspect of Divine command in the mitzva would be lost; an action which is performed for a reason and purpose which we can understand does not need to be commanded. Hence the correct balance involves fulfillment of the mitzvos with a general understanding of their purpose - willingly, as well as performance of all their details - symbolizing the aspect of command and coercion.

And they shall place a multicolored covering and put a blue cloth on top of it (4:6) – Why was the covering on top of the Aron Kodosh made of Techeiles while the other Keilim sufficed with the Tachash multicolored one? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl.** explained that the Aron represented the Torah was covered with Techeilis because it was reminiscent of the Kisei HaKavod. Once that serves as a reminder to the people that the cornerstone of the Mishkan – and thus of life—is Yiras Shomayim, it is possible to consider the strengthening of life through the beauty symbolized by the colors of the Tachash.

Haftorah: And you will be Bound to me forever (Hoshea 2:21) - The **Sfas Emes** notes that after the traditional Eirusin a Kallah still lives in her father's house. So what then is the intention of L'Olam – forever? The Sfas Emes explains that the feelings of uniqueness and specialness that accompany the Eirusin should stay forever. **Rav Yisrael Reisman Shlita** added that every year when it comes to Shavuot we try once again to have the original excitement of Matan Torah. The whole idea of staying up Shavuot by night is really to have that sense of excitement which Klal Yisrael should have had at the first Matan Torah. A sense of excitement of what is coming and what is going to be. It is hard to stay up, some people question if it is Kedai. It is Kedai to make the statement of excitement of what is coming. We even stay up to show the Ahavah to the Borei Olam. We want to show the sense of looking forward and excitement to Matan Torah.