Points to Ponder

Vaeschanan 5779

And you will seek Hashem from there () – How did we start with a search in the plural and end in the finding in the singular? The Vilna Gaon noted that 2 people can seek Hashem but it is only the one who davens to Him with Kavana who shall be successful at finding the proper guidance and answer. The Meshech Chochma adds that when we are attached to Hashem through Deveikus, we also become united with one another and multiples become one.

For this is your wisdom in the eyes of the nations (4:6) – Are we really to keep the Torah merely to impress the nations of the world with our intellectual superiority? Rav Yaakov Haber Shlita explained that we are not to study simply to impress. It is more likely that the nations will scoff at our Mitzva performance. Rather, as a result of performing our Mitzvos, our character will undergo an improvement which will get the world to notice that we are an upstanding group. This, in turn, will inspire us to be a light unto the nations.

You should make it known to your sons and grandsons (4:9) – The gemara notes that if one teaches his grandchild Torah it is as if he received it from Har Choreiv. What does that mean? Rav Reuven Bulka Shlita explained that the Gemara wants us to understand the nature of the idea of commitment. When a grandchild is exposed to a world that is more than 2 generations older than he, the child is aware of the commitment and continuity in the soul of Torah. It demonstrates an authenticity of Torah values and that authenticity creates a commitment of “this is how it ought to be”.

Then Moshe separated () – Rashi explains that the Arei Miklat did not work until the ones in Eretz Yisrael were established. Moshe separated these three in Eiver HaYarden because he felt he needed to grab every possible Mitzva he could. Rav Bernard Weinberger ztl. stresses that Moshe was teaching us that one needs to give his all to Mitzva performance even if he will not totally complete the Mitzva bringing the result of the Mitzva to fruition, he is not exempt from beginning it and gets Sachar for what he DOES succeed with.

And you shall love Hashem (6:5) – Rav Shlomo Levenstein Shlita asked how one is supposed to get to the status of Ahavas Hashem in his daily dealings? He answered based on the comment of the Saba Kadisha of Radishovitz who, when offered stuffed peppers and asked if he loved the peppers explained that it is Hashem he loves and peppers that he eats. In other words, we do not love physical comforts in the world, love is an intense emotion best left in expression of one’s relationship with Hashem.

Teach your sons (6:7) – Rav Simcha Wasserman ztl. noted the meeting he had with Rav Yerucham Levovitz ztl. who told him to think about the Gemara (Pesachim 112a) that more than the calf wants to nurse the cow wants him to nurse. Rav Yerucham told him to remember that this only is true if there is a relationship. If there is none, then the cow is just expelling milk and is not interested in the calf and the proper amounts the calf wants/needs. The same is true in Chinuch. It is not about what the teacher wants to give as much as it is, the ability of the teacher to understand the capacity of the student and wanting to meet it not exceed it.

Do not give your daughter to his son or take his daughter for your son (7:3) – Rav Schachter Shlita would note to us that in Judaism we follow matrilineal descent for Jewish status and patrilineal descent for Yichus. Rav Schachter explained that this is part of the question of whether we are a nation or family. Nationalism is determined by mother for it is intrinsic – and born in utero while family standing is determined by patrilineal descent since father’s family is called family.

**Haftorah  Nachamu Ami – Speak onto the heart of Jerusalem (Yeshayahu 40:1-2) – Rav Shimon Schwab ztl.**highlights the difference between speaking to the heart of Yirushalayim and Nechama. The former is easier – it involves merely speaking words at the time of the Geulah. The words will be easily understood. However, Nechama involves a changing of mind – that which Rav Schwab sees as referring to the intellectual – being able to sense a change that the totality of Jewish history including the suffering of the Galus and Churban were necessary. That process is harder.