Points to Ponder – Ki Sisa 5774

**When you count Bnei Yisroel according to their accounting (30:12)** – what does the Torah mean when it says “according to its numbers”? **The Bobover Rebbe Shlita** notes that the word “L’fikudeichem “ comes from the word for a lack (“VLo Nifkad Meemenu Ish” ). The Rebbe explains that the Torah is giving us a critical message – when we want to raise man out of his doldrums created by his enslavement to the Yetzer HaRa, then each man should give Kofer Nefesh – he should offer his life like he would have otherwise offered a Korban. The difference is that unlike a Korban, his soul can be pure and without impediment.

**Behold I have called Betzalel (31:2**) – Nowhere in the Torah do we actually find Hashem calling Betzalel. Where does Hashem call Betzalel? **Rav Moshe Feinstein ztl**. noted that if Hashem gives any particular talent or reserve to a person, then that IS the calling from Hashem to the person to rise to the occasion and use those talents for the betterment of Kavod Shomayim in the world.

**And in the hearts of those with the wisdom of the heart I have put Chochma (31:4)** – Why give knowledge to those who already possess it? The Gemara (Berachos 55a) notes that Hashem can only give knowledge to those who already have it. But what is the point then in receiving the Chochma? **The Vilna Gaon** notes that the first bit of knowledge that a person needs is the knowledge that one needs to seek knowledge. Rav Chaim Shmuellevitz is quoted as recalling an incident when he went to visit his illustrious uncle, Rav Avrohom Jofen in Novorhodok and asked about the students. The Rosh Yeshiva proudly highlighted each student’s Maalos and where he was “the best.” Yet, he noted one guy whom he described as the “absolute best student I have.” When Rav Chaim asked him what made that student stand out, he said “he is the biggest Mivakesh (seeker of knowledge”). That young man was Rav Yisroel Yaakov Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon.

**Chet HaEigel – Rav Yaakov Ariel Shlita** noted that the Eigel is often debated as to what the sin was. He explains that the Eigel was representative of the celebration of middle steps. It involved focusing on the calf instead of who was leading it, gold instead of what its purchasing power was. The focus on stopping to rest on half-jobs is a sin.

**And he saw the Eigel and the frivolity..and he broke the Luchos (32:19)** – Hashem had already told Moshe about the terrible Avaira of the Eigel. Why did Moshe smash the Luchos when heSAW he people?

**Rav Shalom Schwadron** Ztl. explains that when he heard that the people had sinned, Moshe thought that there was still hope that the people could be shown the error of their ways. However, when he saw the frivolity, he knew that this hope was lost.

**You cannot see my face for no one has ever seen my face and survived (33:20)** – Why can no one see the face of Hashem and live**? Rav Efrayim Greenblatt ztl.** notes that although Moshe spoke to Hashem face to face, he did not see Hashem. For to see Hashem is to become angelic (angel-like?) and angels do not live – they do not choose. One needs to have the ability to choose if s/he is to thrive in a life of good choices.

**No one will desire your land when you go up to Aliya l’Regel (34:24) – Rav Meir Shapiro ztl**. noted that Chimud would not affect anyone travelling up to the land – that the sole purpose in Aliya L’regel would be for the soul. That is to say, one is not supposed to make Aliyah L’regel for physical benefit –rather for Spiritual purpose. That said, if done right, the physical would be taken care of.

**And Aharon saw that Moshe’s face lit up and the people were afraid to approach him (34:30)** **– Rashi** notes that this was due to their sense of inadequacy over sin**. Rav Wolbe ztl**. notes that the fear came from a misunderstanding about Torah. Torah is a power that lifts a person up and brings him into a spiritual world. When we bring Torah into our world instead of trying to live in its world, it brings on fears – including religious obsessions.

Haftorah**: Eliyahu at Har HaCarmel and is answered at Mincha (Melachim I: 18:36) Rav Schachter shlita** noted the Gemara (6b) that reminds us how important we need to prioritize Mincha for Eliyahu was answered at Mincha Time. Rav Schachter asked why Mincha was more important to be careful with than Shachris/ He explained that the 2 Tefillos represent 2 halves of the Korban haTamid and the Chochmei HaKabbalah parallel the Shachris half with man’s necessities and the Mincha with luxuries. Eiyahu was noting that although Hashem can be somewhat forgiving for forgetting to be Modeh on the necessities, the luxuries in life require us to offer thanks to Hashem for them. Forgetting to do so is a serious difficulty.