Bamidbar 2014

1.

Connection between safer Bamidbar and Shevuos

Nachalas Tzvi page 330

What does parshas Bamidbar have to do with Bechukosai? Additionally, what is the connection between safer Vayikra and Bamidbar? Lastly, why do we generally lain (read) Bamidbar before Shavuos? The Gemara in Eruvin (54a) states the Torah only endures within someone who makes himself like a desert. The pasuk at the end of safer Vayikra says these are the Mitzvos Hashem commanded Moshe. The pasuk at the beginning of safer Bamidbar states Hashem spoke to Moshe in the midbar (desert). This is alluding to the reason why Moshe merited receiving and transferring the Torah; because he made himself like a midbar. **Therefore we lain safer Bamidbar before Shavuos in order to refer to this principle of making ourselves like a midbar in order that we can receive the Torah.**

What does the aforementioned Gemara mean when it says that the Torah only endures within someone who makes himself like a desert? **This could be referring to being humble** as stated in Eruvin 54a (Also Bamidbar Raba parsha 1 os 7). The first Mishna in Avos says Moshe received the Torah from Sinai. Why does it say Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and not from Hashem? This is to teach us that Moshe received the lesson about being humble from Sinai in order that he could receive the Torah.
A similar explanation is offered by the Eitz Yosef (commentary on Medrash Tanchuma os vav dibbur hamaschil hefker). **One needs to be humble in order that he will learn from anyone. Similarly, one needs to be humble and willing to teach anyone.**
Another explanation that the Torah only endures within someone who makes himself like a desert is; a midbar is ownerless just like the Torah. Whoever wants the Torah can come and learn and acquire Torah for himself. (Yuma (72b), also Rambam hilchos Talmud Torah perek gimal)
Another explanation that the Torah only endures within someone who makes himself like a desert is based on the Mishna in Avos (fourth perek) that says you should exile yourself to a place of Torah. (רבי נהוראי אומר הוי גולה למקום תורה ואל תאמר שהיא תבוא אחריך שחבירך יקיימוה בידך.**) Get away from the distractions and go to a place of Torah to learn.**
Another explanation that the Torah only endures within someone who makes himself like a desert is suggested by Rashi (Sotah 21b). **Deserts symbolize simplicity. One shouldn't be concerned with physicality's.** This explanation is also offered by the Darchei Musser pages 179-180. The Torah only endures within someone who makes himself like a desert means someone who isn't materialistic, someone who is capable of surviving with bare necessities. The generation of the desert is a quintessential example of this; they survived on mann alone. This is stated explicitly in Avos (perek six); eat bread with salt, sleep on the ground. Someone who learns properly will be taken care of. Hashem Himself will help this individual. Just as those in the desert were divinely helped from the mann that descended from the sky, so too those who toil in Torah will be miraculously helped. To elaborate on this concept let's relate a parable. A son went to school and during lunch time realized that he forgot his lunch at home. He then called his father who subsequently brought his lunch to school. So too explains the Chafetz Chaim,

someone who learns with all of his strength will be taken care of. Our father, Hashem will take care of those who toil in Torah. When one makes themselves like a desert Hashem will take care of their necessities. (Measure for measure (mida keneged mida), since this individual is unconcerned with physicality's, therefore Hashem will take care of his physicality's.)

The question arises, why wasn't the Torah given in a large Beis Medrash? Why did Hashem give us the Torah in a desert? A desert where there are sand storms and other unconducive factors doesn't seem like the optimal setting to give or receive the Torah! Why wasn't the Torah given in a more conducive environment? Based on the aforementioned information we can explain that **the Torah was specifically given in the desert in order to teach the fact that learning can be done anywhere, even in a desert! We are able to learn, even in an unconducive environment!** The Gemara in Taanis (21b) quotes a statement of Rav Yosi who says 'the place of a person doesn't give him honor, rather a person brings honor to his place.' (רבי יוסי אומר לא מקומו של אדם מכבדו אלא אדם מכבד את מקומו.) We can bring Torah wherever we are. We can become great in learning regardless of our situation.

This shtims (coincides) with that which we discussed in parshas Teruma. "Make for me a Mikdash and my presence will dwell within it (בתוכם)." (25, 8) "ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם." Many meforshim (commentators) are bothered by the plurality of the word within it (בתוכם)? The pasuk should be in the singular tense, since there is only one Mikdash? The Or Hachaim Hakadosh explains that the place that an individual sanctifies as a holy place for the presence of Hashem has to be amongst the Jews. The Elshach Hakadosh similarly explains that **the pasuk isn't merely referring to a physical Mikdash; rather, every person must create and make an individual Mikdash within himself. Meaning, even if we are not in a holy environment such as a Beis Medrash or shul, we must still strive to make that environment holy.** The Artscroll on safer Shmuel (alef perik gimal pasuk gimel, page 25) quotes the Avnay Nazir, who says, **'a person is truly in the place where his mind and heart are. Someone, whose thoughts are in holiness, is in a holy place even though his body is elsewhere.'** Meaning that we can be in an unholy place such as waiting for a train at the train station, but if we are learning from a sefer then, then it is as if we are in a holy place. Similarly Rav Shach zasa"l (Rav Shach speaks pages 166-167) says 'in my opinion, if a Jew is immersed in Torah study, then wherever he is, it's as if he is in Israel.'

2.

Flags, Torah and unity

Emes Leyaakov page 413

Why was there such a long delay from the time the Jews left Egypt until starting to use the flags? Why did it take a full year? The flags could potentially represent separation. Each flag had its own symbol and unique message. The Bamidbar Raba (2, 7) says that the flag of every tribe had a special color that corresponded to the color of that tribe on the Choshen (breast plate worn by the Kohen). There were different pictures on each flag. The Ibn Ezra says that the tribe of Reuven had the image of a human. Yehuda had the picture of a loin. Ephraim had the image of a bull etc. Each tribe had its own message, goal and mission. All of these differences could lead to separation. However, once they had the Mishkan, the concern for separation was

nonexistent. Even though they all had a unique and independent type of avoda (way of serving Hashem), nevertheless there was no concern of disunity. Why? They all had one main view in common; the Mishkan and Torah. This can be comparable to the human body. Meaning, even though different body parts have different functions and tasks to carry out, nevertheless they are all part of the same body. Even though the ears were created to hear and the eyes were created to see, they still won't get jealous and fight with one another. **During the duration of time when there wasn't a Mishkan, there was no focus point. One flag was therefore needed in order that there wouldn't be any form of separation. Dissimilarly, following the Mishkan since there was a spiritual focal point, the existence of multiple flags was possible.**

Targum Yonason Ben Uziel comments that **there were 12 different paths in the sea when it split, corresponding to the twelve shevatim** (tribes). Due to this reason the Shulchan Aruch (siman 90 sif 4) quotes the Zohar based on the Gemara in Berachos (34b) that says you should have windows in the place where you daven. The Zohar explicates and recommends that it is good to have minimally 12 windows. The explanation of this Zohar is that these 12 windows correspond to the 12 different paths we took while crossing the Yam Suf (Mediterranean Sea). **These 12 windows serve as a path for the tefilah of each individual tribe. The windows symbolize that each tribe has its own window, but in the end their tefilos all end up in the same place in shamayim (heaven); just like all the shevatim emerged on the other side of the Yam Suf together.** Similarly the Mishna Berurah (siman 68 sif katan 4) writes that there are 12 gates in shamayim correspondent to the 12 shevatim. Each shevet has its independent gate and its distinct customs.