

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 161

Bamidbar | Sanctification and Sacrifice - The Key To Success

MESILOT

Pathways to the Soul

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son
Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita

...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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Publisher and Distributer of the Teachings of
Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel zt"l



500 Frank W Burr Blvd Suite 47
Teaneck, NJ 07666



(954) 800-6526



en@h-l.org.il



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Parshat Bamidbar

The Shabbat Bamidbar Lesson

It was a Shabbat of Parshat Bamidbar. The morning prayer had just ended, and Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel began his weekly lesson.

One who hadn't been privileged to participate in these lessons would not understand how special it was. At the end of the lesson, the participants felt more holy, clean, and pure.

On that particular Shabbat, Rabbi Yoram opened his lesson as follows:¹

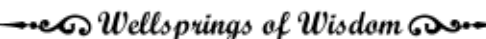
A significant part of our Torah deals with the superiority of the Levites over the rest of the Jewish people. This is expressed, first and foremost, by the fact that G-d commanded Moses to count the Levites separately from the rest of the Jewish people, as it is said: "However, do not count the

tribe of Levi, nor take a census of them among the children of the Jewish people" (Numbers 1:49).

This is due to the superiority of the Levites over the other tribes; as Rashi explains: 'It is fitting for the king's legion to be counted separately'.

The superiority of the Levites over the rest of the Jewish people is also expressed with the special tasks given to them by the Al-mighty, as is said later: "You shall appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the Testimony, and all its vessels, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all its vessels and they shall service it and shall encamp around the tabernacle" (ibid verse 50).

Thus, the Levite tribe was privileged to carry the Tabernacle and its vessels during the forty



1. His words are quoted in 'Imrei Noam' (Numbers, 4).

Parshat Bamidbar - They Are Led With Mercy

years of the Jewish people's sojourn in the desert. They were also privileged to serve within the Tabernacle and the Temple and guard the holy watch.

We must understand: why did the Levite tribe specifically merit this greatness?

We also need to understand: Parshat Bamidbar is always

read on the Shabbat before the festival of Shavuot, the time of the giving of the Torah.² This implies a close connection between the Levites' superiority and the giving of the Torah; but what precisely is this connection?

Before we answer, let us begin by way of introduction.

They Are Led With Mercy

The prophet Isaiah is called 'the prophet of consolations',³ and he

prophesied many good tidings and consolations for the Jewish people.

— *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~* —

2. The Torah portion of Bamidbar is always read before the festival of Shavuot, as ruled in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, 428:4): "And the Torah portion of 'Bamidbar Sinai' is always read before Shavuot."

3. In Tanna Devei Eliyahu Raba (chapter 16) it is stated that the reason Isaiah ben Amoz merited to prophesize salvation and consolations to Israel, more so than all the other prophets, was because he served G-d, with greater and tremendous joy, more so than all the other prophets.

Rabbi Aharon Roth wrote in his book Shomer Emunim (Tzahali Veroni - chapter 5):

"**Know**, my beloved brother, that through holy joy your soul, your spirit, and heart

will be elevated, in the manner of 'his heart was lifted in the ways of G-d' (Chronicles II 17:6), provided that it is accompanied by shame and submission to G-d. Joy can revive many people, strengthening a friend's heart and inclining him toward trust and joy. Thus, sometimes (Avodah Zarah 10b): one can acquire his world in one hour."

In Tzafnat Paneach (Parshat Bo - section 7) it is written about our holy Rabbi, the Arizal, that all the levels and attainments he reached, were all due to the great joy he had during the performance of a commandment.

This was the service of the holy Baal Shem Tov, of blessed memory, who revealed to the world a lofty path which is illuminated by the service of the Divine with joy.

Parshat Bamidbar - They Are Led With Mercy

In one of his prophecies (Isaiah 49), he prophesied about the ingathering of the exiles. Thus he said with his prophetic words:

“Saying to the prisoners: ‘Go free’; To them that are in darkness: ‘reveal yourselves’; They shall feed along the ways, and on all high hills shall be their pasture;

They shall not hunger or thirst, Neither shall the heat or sun smite them; For He that has mercy on them shall lead them, and by springs of water He will guide them.” (Isaiah 49:9-10).

'He that has mercy on them' - the Al-mighty is always merciful to His beloved children, even in the depths of their exile and darkest moments. But His conduct is hidden and not revealed, and in the future, in the

time of redemption, 'He will guide them' - the hidden divine mercies will be revealed, and the conduct of redemption - visible mercy - will be experienced.⁴

It was the third meal of Shabbat Hanukkah, the 2nd of Tevet in the year 5570 (1809) in the city of Breslov.

In the study hall of the great sage Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, followers huddled and listened with pulsating hearts to the sublime words of Torah that were heard in the study hall.

These Torah explanations were later printed in 'Likutei Moharan II, 7, and open with these words: *For He that has mercy on them shall lead them.*

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

When a person wants to rejoice in the service of G-d, immediately the evil inclination wishes to make him feel the morose feelings of a penitent, introducing into his heart the sadness of sins, and it suddenly appears in his eyes as though the joy is instead a great sin.

Therefore, the Baal Shem Tov revealed to his disciples and those who follow his

path that joy is not at all a sin, but rather that through joy a person truly becomes a penitent, and his heart is transformed from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

4. In the words of 'Metzudat David': "*For He that has mercy on them*" - G-d, who has always had mercy on them, will lead them and guide them to a place of water springs and quench their thirst.

Parshat Bamidbar - They Are Led With Mercy

In addition to the straightforward interpretation of the verse that refers to G-d, the Torah teaches us that only a person who has mercy on others can be called a leader.

Every Jew is a leader. Every parent is a leader to their children, every teacher is a leader to their students, and every business owner is the leader of their employees.

Typically, leadership arises spontaneously from the ebb and flow of life.

Yet, Rabbi Nachman reveals to us that not every person who has a leadership title and position is truly worthy of the title 'leader'. A leader can only be someone who identifies and understands the reality of others and cares for them physically and, even more importantly, spiritually.

In the words of Rabbi Nachman:

“The greatest need for mercy is when the Jewish people, G-d forbid, have fallen into sins, for

this is the greatest pity that can be.

The harshest afflictions in the world cannot be compared to the heavy burden of sins, G-d forbid, which are too heavy to be carried at all, as it is said: "For my iniquities have gone over my head: and as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psalms 38:4).

One who knows from where the holiness of the Jewish people is derived and knows of the great spirituality of the Jewish people - knows that the Jewish people are completely removed from sin and do not relate to it at all.

It follows then that all the afflictions in the world are not even considered at all, compared to the heavy burden of sins, G-d forbid.”

For our discussion, we will focus on the leadership role of a parent in the home and how they can spiritually assist their children.

In connection with the importance of the leadership of parents, we share the following tale.

The Mischievous is Rewarded

Rabbi Yair Weinstock wrote:⁵

In a remote town in Romania, in a rural, natural, and beautiful environment, lived Reb Yosef - a straightforward and simple Jew who, for his livelihood, ran a shop selling meat and wine. Reb Yosef was an exceedingly G-d-fearing man and would greatly prolong his morning prayers. During the time he would pray, his righteous wife, Mrs. Pessel managed the shop, and the rest of the day Reb Yosef worked in the shop.

Reb Yosef and Mrs. Pessel had a son, who was named Shmuel Shmelke, after his maternal grandfather.

Little Shmelke excelled from his youth in sharp intellect and exceptional alertness and was a source of pride and pleasure to his parents.

Alas, Mrs. Pessel passed away in her prime years and left her

young son Shmelke an orphan, a toddler of four years old.

Shmelke was thirsty for knowledge and wanted to learn, but his father could not teach him, whether because he was always busy in the shop, or because he himself did not know much Torah learning.

There was no Torah study hall in the small town since there were no children of school age, and besides Reb Yosef, there were only seven Jews in the town, six of whom were elderly.

These elders taught Shmelke a bit of Torah and proper Jewish conduct, but most of his day he roamed around the town and played with the neighboring gentile children.

Every Sunday Shmelke heard the church bell ringing and summoning his friends and their parents to church. During these hours, he always felt sad because the bell

Parshat Bamidbar - The Mischievous is Rewarded

separated him from his friends and left him without friends to play with.

It was the beginning of spring when one Sunday he played with his friends and suddenly noticed that the oppressive church bell did not interrupt their game. His friends ran about joyfully, freed from the church's burden.

'Isn't it Sunday?' - Shmelke wondered aloud. 'Is the priest sick and unable to ring the bell?'

'Ah, you don't understand anything' - his friends shook their heads. You don't know that before Easter it's forbidden to ring the bell. All the church bells are taken now to Rome, and therefore it isn't possible to ring them.

Before they could finish speaking, Shmelke dashed with his small legs to the churchyard, looked up at the tower, but lo and behold, the large metal bell was in its usual place.

He immediately ran back to his friends and scolded them, 'Liars, the bell is in its place as every week. No one took it to Rome.'

Stefan, scratched his head. He too did not understand, but he remembered what he heard from his father and repeated it word for word:

'It's forbidden to ring the bell during these days, two weeks before Easter, to prove that the bell is indeed in Rome.'

'But it's here' the Jewish boy shouted, 'I saw it in the tower as always. Come and see it with your own eyes. You're talking nonsense.'

Stefan shrugged his shoulders. The matter confused him too, but he remembered his father's stern warning.

'My father said that it's strictly forbidden to ring the bell, and anyone who breaks this prohibition must be burned.'

The children fell silent in awe.

Moments later, they forgot the whole matter and, as is the way of children, plunged back into their game, darting full of joy among the lush green grass. A beautiful spring day descended upon the world, and the little ones happily stretched their bones after the long and snowy winter.

Parshat Bamidbar - The Mischievous is Rewarded

However, one child did not stop thinking about the matter. Shmelke walked home with a head full of thoughts. His naughty little brain began processing the data.

‘I will prove to these Christians the falsehood of their ridiculous claim. The only reason they are forbidden to ring the bell is because if they did, everyone would see with their own eyes the folly and the stupidity of this belief that he-who-shall-not-be-named takes all the bells to Rome.’

Shmelke decided to take action.

Shortly after his father closed the shop for business and hung the key next to the door as usual, a small child's head sneaked in. He stretched out his arm inside, grabbed the key off the nail and opened the shop.

The shop was empty, as he had expected. He approached the hanging hooks and took down a juicy red piece of meat, and immediately returned back on his heels not before returning the key to its place.

His father was busy in the basement of the shop with the

wine barrels and did not notice his mischievous son's actions. Had he known what his son was scheming, he would have been none too pleased...

Shmelke peeled a few garlic cloves and generously rubbed them on the large piece of meat. The smell of garlic mixed with the scent of meat and wafted into the distance.

Now everything was ready as planned.

He sneaked into the churchyard and ran under the bell tower.

The old priest in the town would not trouble his weary legs to climb up to the tower to ring the bell. He instead had tied long ropes to both sides of the bell that cascaded downward.

Every Sunday, when he wanted to summon the Christian believers to prayer, he would stand beneath the tower and pull on each end of the ropes, first the right one and then the left, and thus the large bell would sway and tilt from side to side, the clapper inside it striking its walls with a loud ringing sound.

Shmelke's plan was simple in its brilliance:

He cut the meat in two and tied each piece to a different rope with a solid knot that held the fresh red meat tightly.

When he finished his act, he slipped away as fast as his legs could carry him, leaving the wafting gentle breeze to do the work.

It didn't take long for the scent of the fresh red meat, intensified by the sharp smell of the garlic, to spread far and wide and reach the sensitive nostrils of the town's stray dogs looking for prey for their mouths.

They arrived quickly at the churchyard and behold, joy and happiness. Juicy pieces of red meat swayed before them as if inviting them to partake, and with a hearty appetite, they sank their muzzles into the flesh.

However, the ropes didn't reach the ground, they hung in the air at the height of a dog standing upright.

The dogs jumped on their hind legs in an effort to grab the meat. While they had succeeded,

since the ropes were slightly too high for comfort, only small pieces of meat were torn off with each bite, and they needed to leap into the air again and again.

Each such bite from both ends of the rope caused the bell to tilt left and right and clang noisily.

The townsfolk didn't understand how the quiet town was suddenly filled on this fragrant spring night with the loud rings of church bells and the excited barking of dogs.

Everyone rushed towards the church. 'Who is the heretic ringing the bell before Easter?' they asked angrily.

'Perhaps we erred in our calculations and the holiday has already arrived,' suggested one villager.

'Maybe the holiday was moved forward, and we were not notified,' speculated another.

'Perhaps the priest seeks to convey a personal message about his resignation from the head of the church due to the police

Parshat Bamidbar - The Mischievous is Rewarded

investigations that are being conducted against him,' mused a third aloud.

When they all arrived, they were shocked to see who it was that rang the bell. Five or six dogs were jumping into the air, jostling each other aside, and in the meantime, the bell rang and shook with all its might...

For a while, they stood puzzled and flabbergasted by the sight, until it befell them. Someone wanted to mock and disgrace the Christian faith and exhibit that the bell was indeed not in Rome, but instead ringing quite mightily here in their village.

'Who could think and execute such a prank,' they asked each other.

There was no need to think too much.

The whole village knew Shmelke, the clever Jewish boy whose eyes always sparkled with mischief. If there was anyone who could come up with such an idea, it was Shmelke.

"Burn Shmelke the heretic at the stake," one of the villagers

roared, and with that, the signal for a vengeful roar was given.

"Burn Shmelke," they all shouted, "the heretic who disgraced our religion."

For a short while, they deliberated about what to do, until, with the old priest's consent, it was decided that at the first light of the morning, they would all come to Reb Yosef the Jew's house, drag out the impudent boy, and lead him to the market square. There they would set up a pyre of wood around him and burn him alive so that all would see and be forewarned.

The excited villagers dispersed, their thirst for vengeance yet unquenched, with one consolation in their hearts - in the morning, they would burn the boy...

Reb Yosef woke up from his sleep in panic at the sound of forceful knocks on his door. "Who is it?" he yelled toward the door.

"Stefan," a youthful voice replied. "Open the door."

Reb Yosef was puzzled, Stefan? Now, in the middle of the

Parshat Bamidbar - The Mischievous is Rewarded

night? He got up from his bed and opened the door.

Stefan was terrified. He looked around to make sure no one saw him. "Your son is in grave danger," he whispered urgently to Reb Yosef.

Reb Yosef, still groggy from sleep, didn't grasp the young lad's words. "What are you saying?" he asked. "I didn't understand."

Stefan told him about their argument regarding the bell ringing, and apparently, according to all signs, his son had executed a prank that incited all the village's Christians' wrath, and they wanted to execute him at dawn.

Reb Yosef was now fully awake and alert. The sleep escaped his eyes, and he was horrified. "Are you sure about this?" he asked breathlessly.

"Yes. I'm completely serious, your son's life is in danger. I like Shmelke, and I don't want him to be burned to death".

"Thank you," Reb Yosef told him heartily and pressed a silver coin into the boy's hand as a

token of gratitude. "You can rest assured and peacefully."

He knew the villagers well. They were fervent Christians and indeed would not forgive the mischievous boy. Without delay, he grabbed Shmelke, who was sleeping peacefully in his bed, unaware of the 'firestorm' he had just ignited, lifted him onto the wagon, and covered him with a pile of vegetables just in case someone decided to pursue them.

Without delay, he fled the village until he reached a town a few hours away. There, they hid until dawn.

Indeed, at first light, the Christian villagers came to Reb Yosef's house and without warning, banged on the door and tore it off its hinges.

To their shock and disappointment, the house was empty, the boy had vanished. With heavy hearts, they left the house.

In the morning, Reb Yosef continued his flight and after a few hours arrived at another town where Jews lived, and entrusted his son to a Jew who promised to faithfully raise the motherless

Parshat Bamidbar - Five Gates of the Soul

child who was now also a fugitive from his home out of fear of the Christians' vengeance.

Reb Yosef returned to his home when the situation calmed down a bit, but did not allow Shmelke to return because the anger that was directed against him was very intense. Meanwhile, the boy thrived and grew in Torah under the tutelage of the Gaon Rabbi Shlomo Charif who raised him as a son, taught him Torah and mitzvot, and when he reached maturity, found him a wife.

Shmelke studied diligently, and with his exceptional talents, thrived and became one of the leading rabbis of Hungary, serving as the head of the rabbinical courts in the towns of Chust and Selish.

Until the end of his days, he never managed to fully reconcile with his father. Reb Yosef would reprimand him from time to time,

"See what your mischief has led to. You had to flee the village and couldn't grow up like every child close to his father."

Rabbi Shmelke, however, would respond and say, "See what my mischief has led to, if not for that act of youthful frivolity, I would presumably be selling meat in the grocery store to this day".

Returning to our earlier discussion: Young Shmelke was caught up in idleness and boredom, but the Al-mighty had mercy on him, and in a wondrous turn of events was pulled out of there and implanted in a wonderful and conducive environment.

However, it doesn't always happen this way, and it is incumbent upon us to explore and invest every effort to help our children escape idleness and boredom.

We will understand this following an introduction...

Five Gates of the Soul

When G-d wished to create man so that he would serve Him with a whole

heart, He formed him and placed him in the Garden of Eden.

Parshat Bamidbar - Five Gates of the Soul

Man stood on his feet and experienced the divine completely.

Every person has five senses: taste, smell, touch, hearing, and sight.⁶ These five senses are the ones that collect for a person all the knowledge and impressions from outside of the person.

These five senses are the gates and doorways to elevate a person, if he is worthy, to divine revelations, and if he is not worthy, to descend to the lowest depths.

Adam in the Garden of Eden was indeed worthy, and in all his five senses he achieved divine revelations and attainments.

After Man was created, the Holy One, blessed be He, took a

rib from his side and created the woman from it - Eve.

Adam and Eve now dwelled in bliss in the Garden of Eden, the radiance of G-d's presence shining over them, and a good life of goodness and pleasure prepared before them.

Then, as described in the Zohar (Zohar Chadash Eicha, page 111a), the serpent passed by, beheld their glory, became jealous of them, and said in his heart, 'I must interfere!'

The serpent approached the woman and began to speak with her: "Did G-d actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" (Genesis 3:1)?

❧ *Wellsprings of Wisdom* ❧

6. The sense of taste - is the most limited sense, as it can only detect taste food that is placed directly in the mouth.

The sense of smell - has a wider range, and can smell something that is in front of the nostrils or in the vicinity.

The sense of touch - can feel anything within the more distant reach of one's hands, but is also limited to the place one's hand touches.

The sense of hearing - is broader and can hear everything that is heard in the room and also outside it to some distance.

The fifth sense, the sense of sight - is the strongest sense, and it can look at great distances. For example: when standing on a high mountain and nothing obstructs its path, one can see boundlessly to the distance where heaven and earth seem to meet.

Parshat Bamidbar - Five Gates of Child Rearing

Eve replied to him: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden" (ibid., verse 2).

The serpent was filled with joy: 'She is interacting with me, she sees and hears me, 'the gates of her soul' are open, and I can penetrate inside.'

He then continued to confuse her soul until eventually, she ate from the tree of knowledge - "when the woman saw that the tree was good for consumption, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then they heard the sound of G-d, the L-rd strolling in the garden with the day's breeze" (Genesis 3:6-8).

The holy Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, the 'Bnei Yissaschar' of blessed memory, wrote:

'Behold, all the senses are mentioned in connection with the sin of Adam, since all of them were used in his sin, 'when the woman saw' - the sense of sight, 'she took of its fruit' - the sense of touch, 'and ate' - the sense of taste, 'and they heard' - the sense of hearing.

Only the sense of smell is not mentioned there. We understand from here that the sense of smell was not as damaged as the other senses because it was not used in this sin. You will, therefore, find the sense of smell to be spiritual, and even today, is enjoyed by the soul and not the body'.

Five Gates of Child Rearing

Ever since the first sin of the Tree of Knowledge, a thick veil was created over the five senses. The information we 'absorb' and 'draw' from the external world into ourselves is a mix of good and evil, accurate and inaccurate. One must exert great effort and work to attain the Divine.

In order to 'absorb' true information - the divine reality that is found and revealed within every detail of creation - we must purify and refine our senses, and the more we purify ourselves, the greater and more powerful the revelation we then experience.

Parshat Bamidbar - The Establishment of Torah Schools

This is true as well in relation to education:

Every child has five senses through which he absorbs the outside reality, and through them, he builds his internal reality and world.

As parents, it is incumbent upon us to ensure that in these five senses - taste, smell, touch,

hearing, and sight, the child absorbs the message and education we wish to convey to him.

It is written in 'Sefer Habrit' that although proper education is conveyed through all five senses, the primary form of education is expressed through the two senses of sight and of hearing.⁷

The Establishment of Torah Schools

The Talmud relates (Bava Batra 21a)

Rav Judah said in the name of Rav, 'Indeed, that man is remembered for good, Joshua ben Gamla was his name, for were it not for him, Torah would have been forgotten from Israel.

At first, whoever had a father, his father would teach him the Torah, and whoever did not have a father would not learn the Torah.

What verse did they expound to support this? They expounded the verse: 'You shall teach them to your children' (Deuteronomy

Wellsprings of Wisdom

7. In the words of 'Sefer Habrit' (Part 1, Discourse 17, Chapter 8):

The first two senses, of sight and hearing, how priceless is their virtue and how powerful is their effect on all the other senses. They are used by the soul to attain eternal life, apart from what they are used for the needs of the body.

Through them, a person attains the word of G-d, the Torah of truth, ethics,

wisdom, and the study of good character traits according to his understanding of books which he reads through the sense of sight, or according to what he receives from teachings of truth attained through the sense of hearing.

These are the two gates of righteousness - the eye that sees and the ear that hears, through which the soul reaches ultimate success of all eternity, while without them, the soul remains lacking'.

Parshat Bamidbar - The Establishment of Torah Schools

11:19). Since the word 'otam' - 'them' is written without a vav, it reads as if it says, 'you yourself shall teach your children,' meaning the father himself is commanded to teach his son.⁸

Since many children under this arrangement did not learn Torah, the sages appointed teachers for

the children in Jerusalem so that the children would go there and learn the Torah. What verse did they expound as the source for their decree? They expounded the verse: 'For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah, and the word of the L-rd from Jerusalem' (Isaiah 2:3).

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

8. When the saintly Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, , studied these words of the Gemara, he asked the following question (Kovetz Shiurim, Bava Batra - letter 70):

It must be understood, did the sages not expound in Sifrei as quoted in Rashi on Parshat Ekev: "you shall teach them to your children" (Deuteronomy 6:7) - these refer to the students. It would seem that this contradicts the exposition here (that one should teach only his own sons)?

He answered that there is truly no contradiction here. As long as the boy is not one's student, he is not considered as his son, and therefore he is not commanded to teach him Torah.

However, once the boy becomes a student to his teacher, he is to him as a son, and therefore he is included in the command 'and you shall teach them to your children' and is obligated to teach him as a 'son'.

In this regard, the great sage Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz, of blessed memory, wrote

(‘Bimchitzatam shel Gedolei HaTorah, Part 2 - Page 81):

The Gaon Rabbi Elchanan fulfilled these words physically - he gave his life for his students, and they were treated by him as actual sons.

A year before the outbreak of World War II, Rabbi Elchanan visited America. When he prepared to return, his admirers wondered aloud: 'Isn't the danger posed by the Nazis very real and palpable?' They tried to persuade him to stay, and even offered to bring his two sons - who were still young men - to America.

Rabbi Elchanan replied: 'Do I have only two sons? I have four hundred sons. All the students in the yeshiva are my sons, and I cannot abandon them'.

In 1939, with the outbreak of war, he had an entry visa to the United States and an entry certificate to the Land of Israel, but he refused to use them, saying: "As long as even one student is here, I am not allowed to save my own life".

Parshat Bamidbar - The Sense of Vision and Sound

However, this decree was still insufficient:

Those who had a father, their father would take them to Jerusalem to be taught there, but those who did not have a father would not go and learn.

Therefore, the sages expanded the decree:

They decreed that teachers be appointed in every district, and the children would begin learning Torah at the age of sixteen or seventeen.

However, once again, even this decree was insufficient:

These older students, when their teacher would be displeased with them, would be defiant to the teacher and disrespectfully leave.

This matter was not rectified until Rabbi Joshua ben Gamla came and enacted that teachers be appointed in every province and in every city, and that the children be taught Torah at the young age of six or seven.

Through this enactment, Joshua ben Gamla ensured that the Torah would not be forgotten by the people of Israel.

The Sense of Vision and Sound

The Talmud we quoted above explains that the first institution of Torah study was established in Jerusalem. Those who established it relied on the verse: 'For out of Zion shall go forth Torah, and the word of

the L-rd from Jerusalem' (Isaiah 2:3).

Jerusalem is the holiest city,⁹ and as such, its holiness assists one in having an open heart and attaining the holy Torah.

~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~

9. In the words of the Mishna (Kelim, Chapter 1, Mishnahs 6-8):

There are ten levels of holiness, the Land of Israel is holier than all other

lands. Cities that are surrounded by a wall are holier yet. Inside the wall of Jerusalem is even holier, where holy sacrifices and tithes are to be eaten.

Parshat Bamidbar - The Sense of Vision and Sound

But the Tosafot commented and interpreted these words of the Talmud differently (Bava Batra 21a, 'Ki MiTzion'):

'For when a child would see the great holiness and the priests engaged in divine service, he would direct his heart even more towards fear of Heaven and learning Torah'.

Meaning that those who first established the institution of Torah study understood that in Jerusalem, the two main senses of the child—the sense of sight and the sense of hearing—could achieve completeness.

The Chatam Sofer added and wrote (ibid):

Not only did the students benefit from staying in Jerusalem, but also the teachers did too, for when they stayed in Jerusalem, they achieved greater fear of Heaven.

Consequently, when they would teach the students, there was 'a force in their words to effect greatly and to imprint on the souls of the children,

because words that come from a fearful heart and awe, are guaranteed to enter the hearts of the youth, and ignite them like a burning fire with fear and love of the L-rd'.

Even after Torah schools were established throughout the land, the lesson was not forgotten, and attention was paid to the senses of sight and hearing everywhere.

This is the answer to our question: How can we help our children escape idleness and boredom?

The answer: We pass on good and positive messages to our children through these two senses. By causing these two senses of vision and hearing to absorb holiness and Jewish content, we create in them a taste for Judaism, and they will be drawn after the service of the L-rd 'like a lion who roars'.

We will now proceed to answer the two questions with which we opened.

Sharing in the Suffering of Another

Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel, of blessed memory, once said the following in a talk:¹⁰

The tribe of Levi had a special virtue, which we understand when we return to the Torah portion of 'Vayetze' in the book of Genesis, where the Torah tells of the birth of the holy tribes and the names given to them.

We find an interesting distinction between Levi and his brothers. Our matriarchs chose the names of Jacob's sons, as it is said: "Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben" (Genesis 29:32), "she conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Simeon" (ibid., verse 33), and so on for the other tribes.

However, when Levi was born, it is said: "Therefore his name was called Levi" (ibid., verse 34), which Rashi explains there: 'The L-rd sent the angel Gabriel, who brought the baby before Him, and G-d called him this name.'

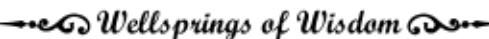
Since G-d Himself gave Levi's name, he was instilled with a special holiness, and a tremendous love and special concern for all of the Jewish people.

Therefore, when Levi saw through the divine spirit that rested upon him that the offspring of the Jewish people were destined to be enslaved in Egypt and to perform hard labor - he was greatly distressed.

Even though he seemingly had no reason to be distressed since he knew that this decree would not apply at all to his own descendants, his heart, united in true unity with every Jew, felt immense pain for them, and as a result of his great distress, he named his three sons with names that express the suffering of the Jewish people.

In the words of the holy Shelah (Parshat Va'era):

The tribe of Levi was not destined to be in exile, and while



10. Imrei Noam (Numbers, 4).

Parshat Bamidbar - Sharing in the Suffering of Another

Levi knew this he nonetheless wanted to share in the distress that would befall the general public. What did he do? He named his sons after the exile. 'Gershon' - to note that they would be strangers in a land not theirs, the name 'Kehath' - to note that their teeth were blunted, and the name 'Merari' to connote that "they made their lives bitter" (Exodus 1:14).

Since Levi, out of his great distress for the Jewish people, named his three sons after the enslavement and suffering of the Jewish people, this beautiful quality, to share in the suffering of the Jewish people, deeply entered the souls of his sons, grandchildren, and descendants, and they too always greatly shared in the suffering of the Jewish people.

Therefore, when the sons of the tribe of Levi were in Egypt, even though the decree of enslavement by Pharaoh did not apply to them at all, not even one day passed without them fasting and increasing in prayers and supplications before G-d, may He be blessed, to have mercy on

their poor and oppressed brothers and save them from distress.

Of all the sons of the tribe of Levi themselves, Kehath and his sons shared in the suffering of the Jewish people more than anyone, and Amram, his firstborn son, shared in the suffering of the Jewish people more than anyone, to the extent that in his great distress, he adopted the custom of Levi, and named his daughter 'Miriam' - to express the bitterness of the enslavement that began on the day of her birth.

It was by virtue of this beautiful quality of sharing in the suffering of the Jewish people that characterized Amram, that he merited that the light of the world, Moses our teacher, be born to him. Moses, whose entire essence was dedicated to the Jewish people and to bear their burdens and suffering.

Already in his tender and delicate youth in the palace of Pharaoh, Moses set aside all his pleasures and comforts and went out to his brothers to meditate upon their sufferings, as described by our sages in the Midrash (Exodus Rabbah, Parashah 1 - Letter 27):

Parshat Bamidbar - The Tribe of Levi

'He saw their burdens and cried and said: 'I am in pain for you. If only that I could die for you'.

There is no labor harder than the labor of clay, and he offered his shoulders and helped each and every one of them. He saw a heavy burden on a young one and a light burden on an old one, a man's burden upon a woman and a woman's burden upon a man, an elder's burden on a youth and a youth's burden on an old man, and he would set aside his own status and go and ease their burdens for them.'

Because of Moses' great compassion for the Jewish people, and his deep distress in their suffering, G-d chose him to be the

shepherd and leader of the Jewish people, and spoke with him face to face, as further explained in the continuation of the aforementioned Midrash: G-d said, "You have left your own affairs and gone to see the suffering of the Jewish people and acted towards them like brothers - I will leave the higher beings and the lower beings and speak with you."

It was G-d's will that those who lead the Jewish people specifically be those who possess compassion for the Jewish people, and have a large and wide heart that can contain the suffering and distress of the entire nation, as it is said: "*For He that has mercy on them shall lead them, and by springs of water He will guide them*" (Isaiah 49:10).

The Tribe of Levi

After this introduction, we can well understand what we initially asked: Why did G-d specifically choose the sons of the tribe of Levi to bear the Tabernacle and its vessels and to safeguard the holy service?

The answer to this is: When G-d saw the immense compassion

that the sons of the tribe of Levi had for all of the Jewish people and how they greatly shared in the sorrow of the Jewish people even though they were not directly affected by this sorrow at all, He decided that they were the most suitable to approach the holy and to bear the Tabernacle and its

Parshat Bamidbar - The Tribe of Levi

vessels, as well as to serve Him in the Tabernacle and in the Temple for generations to come.

More specifically, because the sons of the tribe of Levi wept greatly over the suffering of their brothers, the Jewish people in Egypt, G-d chose them to sing and to play music in the Temple.

As the 'Sefat Emet' writes (Parshat Bamidbar - Year 5693-1933):

'Therefore, the Levites were chosen to sing and play music in the Temple, because presumably when they were free from work in Egypt, they wept and prayed for the children of the Jewish people'.

This is hinted at in what is said: "He releases the prisoners in a proper way" (Psalms 68:6), where the word for 'in a proper way' 'Bekosharot' is an acronym for 'Bechi Vsherut' - weeping and service.

This means that by virtue of the fact that the tribe of Levi wept for the Jewish people, G-d had mercy on them and released them from their imprisonment and exile ('releases the prisoners'), and

they ultimately merited to sing and play music in the Temple.

Since Kehath and his sons shared in the sorrow of the Jewish people more than all the other Levites, they therefore merited the holiest service in the Tabernacle - to bear on their shoulders the Ark of the Covenant.

Based on the above, we can understand another point brought up by the 'Chatam Sofer' in his commentary on the verse: "Amalek was the first of nations, but their end is eternal destruction" (Numbers 24:20):

'I heard, I know not in the name of who, nor do I understand its intent, I will only transcribe as I heard and let the wise hear:

The acronym of 'Levi, Kehath, Amram, Moses' is 'Amalek'. Thus: "Amalek was the first of nations," being that Levi and his sons were the heads of the tribes, which are each called "nations" (as in Rashi, Genesis 35:11). "but their end is eternal destruction" for the final letter of the names 'Levi, Kehath, Amram, Moses'

Parshat Bamidbar - The Hesitant Elders

spell 'death', to indicate the end and eradication of Amalek. Thus, I heard without explanation.'

With these words, the 'Chatam Sofer' suggests that the special power of the holy lineage of Levi, and all those who follow their path throughout the generations, has the unique power to subdue the wicked Amalek.

For Amalek would rejoice in the suffering of the Jewish people. Whenever Amalek heard of Jewish people suffering and in distress, there was no greater joy for him in the world. At every opportunity he had, Amalek ran to spill the blood of the Jewish people, and licked it up with great pleasure. As stated in Midrash Tanhuma (Ki Teitzei, 9):

Who are 'Amalek? A people that came to lick (לִקַּח) the blood of the Jewish people like a dog.

Therefore, specifically these four righteous individuals, Levi, Kehath, Amram, and Moses, whose trait was the exact opposite of that of Amalek, and who grieved deeply for the sorrow of the Jewish people more than anyone else (Levi more than all of Jacob's sons, Kehath more than all the sons of Levi, Amram more than all the sons of Kehath, and Moses more than all the sons of Amram, as mentioned above) specifically they, and the righteous of the generations who follow their path, have the power and ability to subdue Amalek and to obliterate him from the world: 'but their end is eternal destruction'.

The Hesitant Elders

Behold, Parshat Bamidbar is read every year on the Shabbat before the festival of Shavuot, the time of the giving of our Torah. The above mentioned is closely related to the events that unfolded on Mount Sinai and the giving of the Torah.

To explain:

The day after the event at Mount Sinai, G-d commanded Moses to ascend to Mount Sinai to receive the Tablets of the Covenant (Exodus 24:18). G-d emphasized to Moses that he alone should ascend the mountain, whereas the rest of the elders were to stand and bow from a distance,

Parshat Bamidbar - The Hesitant Elders

but not ascend with him to the mountain.

As it is said: "and to Moses He said, 'Come up to G-d, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of the Jewish people, and worship from afar. Moses alone shall come close to G-d, but they shall not come near, nor shall the nation go up with him'" (Exodus 24:1-2). Accordingly, Moses instructed the elders: "Wait here for us until we come back to you" (ibid., verse 14).

To understand why G-d did not allow the elders to have the privilege of joining Moses in his ascent to Mount Sinai, we must recall what the Torah describes in Exodus chapters 4-5.

After G-d appeared to Moses in the burning bush and commanded him to go to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to demand the release of the Israelites, Moses, along with his brother Aaron, gathered all the elders of the Jewish people and delivered G-d's message.

Moses intended for all the elders to then accompany him to

Pharaoh, hoping that Pharaoh would be more inclined to heed Moses' request upon seeing the entire dignified delegation.

However, to Moses' disappointment, when it came time to appear before Pharaoh, he and Aaron found themselves alone; none of the elders accompanied them, as it is stated: "Afterward Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, 'Thus says the L-rd, G-d of the Jewish people: 'Let My people go''" (Exodus 5:1) - which indicates that Moses and Aaron went alone.

The elders feared reprisal from Pharaoh and found 'justifiable' reasons to excuse themselves from this divine mission, and as a result, each one of them excused himself along the way to Pharaoh's palace, leaving Moses and Aaron alone. This evasion did not find favor in G-d's eyes. G-d appreciates those who do not turn away from the troubles of the Jewish people and do not shirk their communal responsibilities, and G-d waited for an opportune moment to rebuke the elders for this behavior.

Parshat Bamidbar - The Hesitant Elders

When the time of the revelation of Mount Sinai arrived, and all of the Jewish people heard that Moses would soon ascend the mountain to receive the Torah, the elders were certain that they too would be privileged to ascend with Moses. On that destined morning, the elders dressed in their finest Shabbat clothes, eagerly awaiting to ascend the mountain.

However, precisely then they received a 'surprise'. Suddenly, they heard from Moses a clear command from G-d: "Wait here for us until we return back to you" (Exodus 24:14).

Which conveyed to them concisely: All of you stay here with the rest of the nation, and have no permission to ascend the mountain. Those who shirked the burden and sorrow of the Jewish people will not merit to see their glory and joy.

Their punishment did not end there. Later on, when the Israelites complained to G-d about leaving Egypt to simply wander about in the desert, G-d's wrath was kindled, and in punishment: "The fire of the L-rd

burned among them and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp" (Numbers 11:1), which Rashi explains to refer to the leaders and prominent ones, meaning the fire consumed the most distinguished among the nation, that is, those very elders.

The practical lesson to be learned from all the above is that a person must not ignore the distress of another Jew, as the verse says: "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor; I am G-d" (Leviticus 19:16).

A person must know that if Divine Providence has arranged for him to see or hear about any Jew in any distress, it is clear proof that he has the power to help the other if he truly wishes to.

Whoever, G-d forbid, closes his eyes and blocks his ears, ignoring the sorrow and trouble of others, G-d, measure for measure, will ignore him when he needs salvation and will not answer his prayers, as it is said: "Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will cry out himself as well and not be answered" (Proverbs 21:13).

Parshat Bamidbar - Summary and Practical Applications

On the other hand: One whose eyes and ears are constantly open to the unfortunate and the needy, and does everything within his power to help a Jew in distress, when his prayer for

his close ones reaches Heaven, immediately G-d, blessed be He, accepts it willingly and fulfills all his requests, and bestows upon him grace, kindness, mercy, and abundant success.

Summary and Practical Applications

1. Every Jew is a leader in some capacity. An individual initially leads himself, a parent leads their children, a teacher leads their students, and similarly, a business owner is the leader of their employees, they only differ in the number of people under their leadership.

However, not everyone who has people under their guidance is worthy of the title 'leader'. A true leader is a person who feels and senses the reality of others and cares for them both materially and spiritually.

2. Every person has five senses: taste, smell, touch, hearing, and sight. These five senses bring all the knowledge and impressions one experiences outside themselves into the person. These five senses are also the gateways and doorways that bring the person, if he merits, to great divine insights, or conversely, the opposite, G-d forbid.

After the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, a thick veil was drawn over the human

senses, and since then, the information we 'absorb' and 'draw' from the external world into ourselves is mistaken and misguided, and mixed with good and evil. As a result, in order to 'absorb' the divine reality that can be found and revealed in every detail of creation, we must purify and refine our senses, and the more we purify - the more we merit a tremendous revelation.

3. Just as every person absorbs the reality around them through their senses, so too do children absorb the outside reality through their senses and through them, build their internal reality and world. We as parents are tasked with ensuring that in all five of their senses, they absorb the proper message and the education we want to convey to them.

Although education is received through all five of the senses, it is mainly expressed through the two senses of sight and hearing.

4. By passing on to our children good and positive messages through these

Parshat Bamidbar - Summary and Practical Applications

two senses with holy and Jewish content, we create in them a taste and desire for Judaism, and they will be drawn after the service of G-d.

So it was with the service of the Temple in Jerusalem, where every child, teacher, and people in general, 'who saw great holiness and priests engaged in service would direct his heart towards fear of Heaven and learning Torah'.

Consequently, when the teachers and parents learned with their students, there was "great power in their words to effect greatly and imprint on the souls of the children, since words that come from a heart filled with fear and awe will surely enter the hearts of the children, igniting them like a burning fire with fear of the L-rd and His love."

5. Part of the Jewish people's identity is sharing in the sorrow and bearing the burden with one's fellow.

A person must know that if Divine Providence has caused him to see or hear about another Jew in distress, this clearly indicates that he has the power to help him. If he truly wishes, he will succeed, and he must, therefore, not ignore this opportunity.

Anyone who opens his eyes and ears to the unfortunate and the needy and who helps another Jew in distress, G-d immediately accepts his prayers willingly, fulfills his requests, and bestows upon him grace, kindness, mercy, and abundant success.

6. Not only will the person himself merit this, but he also embeds this desirable and lofty character trait in the hearts of his children and descendants after him.

Shabbat Shalom!





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Bamidbar**

2nd of Sivan, 5784



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New York	8:07 pm	9:16 pm	9:38 pm
Miami	7:53 pm	8:50 pm	9:23 pm
Los Angeles	7:45 pm	8:48 pm	9:16 pm
Montreal	8:23 pm	9:39 pm	9:53 pm
Toronto	8:39 pm	9:52 pm	10:10 pm
London	8:56 pm	10:28 pm	10:27 pm
Jerusalem	7:28 pm	8:18 pm	9:15 pm
Tel Aviv	7:25 pm	8:16 pm	9:11 pm
Haifa	7:26 pm	8:17 pm	9:12 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:23 pm	8:13 pm	9:12 pm

Pathways to the Heart

From the Words of

HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l

The young men who are particular to study Tanach, draw great divine energy in their work and are very successful, for this has great value. Therefore, one with children should train them to recite and recite words of the Torah, and if necessary, to do so for a few coins.

No part of the Torah is lacking, each has its own great spiritual energy, whether it be Tanach, Mishnah; Rashi, Mechilta, Tosefta, or Midrash; they each have unique advantages, and must not be skipped over.

As the Talmud states (Chagigah 3b): "They were all given by one shepherd, one G-d bestowed them, one benefactor stated them, it was all said by the Master of all, blessed be his name, as stated 'And G-d uttered the following saying' (Exodus 20)".



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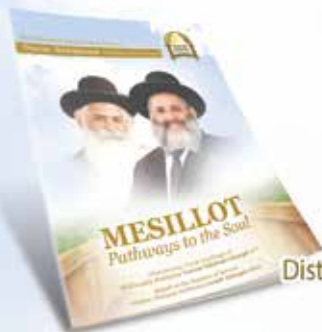
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