

Be'ha'alotcha 5771

BS"D Parashat Be'Ha'alotcha

The reading of parashat Be'ha'alotcha this Shabbat, three days after the holiday of Shevuot, is not a common occurrence, but when they do appear in close proximity it has more than symbolic importance.

Shevuot is the day when HaShem designated the Jewish nation to be His "chosen people" and gave us the holy Torah with its many laws, requirements and restrictions.

And the first mitzva in our parsha – lighting the menorah as part of the daily sacrificial service – "sheds light" on the essence of Shevuot.

The parashat begins:



And HaShem said to Moshe. Speak to Aharon and say to him, when you raise up the candle, the seven stems should point in the direction of the menora

Rashi explains the unusual use of the term "when you raise up the candle" which should have been "when you light the candle".



*Aharon was directed to light the candle until he will be certain that the flame will **rise up by itself**.*

The Torah is HaShem's directives to His people Israel, from cradle to grave. There is no aspect of human life that does not fall within a Torah mitzva. The laws are stated in the Written Torah, expounded upon in the Oral Torah, Halachic

decisions appear in the Shulchan Aruch, and are put into practical application in the responsa literature.

Question: Was it HaShem's desire to create "Halachic" robots, where the written word is king, and like good disciplined soldiers we fulfill its dictates in a mechanical fashion. To daven when the Halacha says we should, whether or not we understand what we are saying. To give our 10% to charity not really feeling the pain of the recipient. To cry on Tisha Be'Av over a Bet Hamikdash no one really misses, and put away the kinot (lamentation) booklets in the knowledge that we will need them again next year.

Or is there more to being a Torah observant Jew?

I believe that Hashem "had in mind" a very elevated purpose for all the mitzvot.

I will explain:

The Gemara (Ketubot 110b) records:



*Rabbi Chiya ben Gamda would roll in the soil of Eretz Yisrael, **in abidance with the verse** (Tehilim 102:15):*



For her children desired her stones and favored her soil

Rashi in his commentary on the actions of Rabbi Chiyah ben Gamda simply repeats the verse:



For her children desired her stones and favored her soil

What is Rashi, the great teacher and commentator, telling us

by simply quoting the verse?

Rashi in his great wisdom is alluding to the most profound idea in Yiddishkeit.

If you look carefully you will see that Rashi quotes the verse from Tehillim as stated in the Gemara's text, while omitting the essential word:



in abidance with the verse

Rashi is in effect saying, that if one loves Eretz Yisrael because that's the requirement of the law as stated in the verse, then that is tantamount to respecting and being in awe of one's parents just because the Torah says so. In both cases love that is adjudicated by law is a contradiction in terms; one cannot be compelled to love. Love is beyond the law which stops at the gates of one's heart.

Aharon was directed to light the menorah until the flame "**will rise up by itself**". So too is the goal of Shavuot, that the mitzvot were initially presented to us by Hashem as compelling requirements, with the purpose that as we grow in spirituality the mitzvot will become a reflexive part of the Jewish personality. And just as one becomes elevated from the fundamental command to respect and be in awe of one's parents to the level that it is self evident that this is what should be, so too must it be with regard to all the other Godly commands in the Torah. The mitzvot have to merge into a Torah personality where truth, justice, compassion, love of God and fellow Jew and all else that the Torah demands become ingrained into a natural reflex of the individual Jew.

Rashi is telling us that Rabbi Chiya ben Gamda rolled in the soil of Eretz Yisrael not because the verse instructs one to love the land, but because he himself was aware of the

profound kedusha (sanctity) inherent in the Land of Israel.

A short story to illustrate the above.

Two Yeshiva students – in the United States of Brooklyn or Monsey – were comparing their individual private meetings with the rosh yeshiva.

Moshe discussed with the rosh yeshiva the matter of his desire to live in Eretz Yisrael, and Chaim brought to the rosh yeshiva his intention to marry a young lady he was seeing.

The conversation went on as follows:

Moshe: The RY said that as long as I am learning so well there is no reason to leave, especially when there is no imperative mitzva to live in Eretz Yisrael, although one does have a mitzva when doing so.

Chaim: The RY said that as long as I am learning so well there is no reason to stop and get married, especially when there is no imperative mitzva to marry just now, although I would have a mitzva if I would marry her.

Moshe: The RY also said that it is easier to make a living in the US than in Eretz Yisrael, so plan to stay here.

Chaim: The RY also said to me that getting married would require me to work in support of my new family, whereas now I am free of such responsibilities in order to learn.

Moshe: The RY also said that there is little kedusha in the land where the initiatives for its resettlement came from people who were not dati.

Chaim: The RY also said that since I met the young lady through my cousin who is not religious, even though she is very much so, no good can come from such a marriage.

Then Chaim looked at Moshe and said to him with a great smile

on is face, "Do You Know something Moshe. I'm going to marry her, **because I love her**".

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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