



דרכים בפרשה

במדבר



שאו את ראש כל עדת בני ישראל למשפחתם לבית אבתם במספר שמות כל זכר לגלגלתם

Take a census of the entire assembly of the Bnei Yisroel, according to their families, according to their fathers' household, by number of the names, every male according to their head count. (1:2)

The *Gemara* in *Masechta Megilla* (31b) tells us that *Parshas Bamidbar* is always read the Shabbos preceding the Yom Tov of Shavuos. Shavuos is called a “Rosh HaShana” for the fruits of the trees, and Chazal want to put behind the “curses” of *Bechukosai* with at least a buffer of a Parsha before encountering this “Rosh HaShana”. (Similarly, after reading the “curses” of *Parshas Ki Savo* in *Devarim*, we have a week before *Rosh Hashana*.)

However, why was this specific *parsha* the one that was chosen to be before our Yom Tov? What Shavuos message can be learned from it? The *parsha* begins with a command that Moshe Rabbeinu take a full counting of the entire congregation of the Bnai Yisroel. Rashi explains that HaShem requests this counting out of His love for us. What is interesting is that it is somewhat unclear as to why HaShem needs this counting? Obviously HaShem knows our exact number at exactly every moment. Furthermore, Rashi (*Bamidbar-3:16*) tells us that Moshe would stand outside each tent for modesty reasons and HaShem would call out the number. The same way HaShem can relay the numbers to

Moshe standing outside when there are children, He can do the same for the adults as well without asking Moshe to ever leave his own tent. There is no logical reason why HaShem needed this counting, yet Moshe is commanded to do so.

The Ramban explains that HaShem wanted every household to have the opportunity to come in contact with Moshe and Aharon, giving over their names and being counted personally by their leaders. This would give each person a sense of individual worth and an opportunity to receive brachos from the leaders.

Rav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi offers another idea. HaShem was teaching Moshe that when it comes to a job that HaShem gives us, we are told to do ours and HaShem will do the rest. HaShem does not need us to work our jobs as a means of sustenance or even to *shvitz* over a difficult Tosfos in order to acquire Torah. He can spoon-feed it to us just as easily. But HaShem wants us to put in the effort and do what we can.

We can offer another answer: The *gemara* in *Masechta Avoda Zara* (3b) relates that when

Mashiach comes there will be many gentiles who will try and present themselves as *geirim*. They will come wearing *tefillin* on their “heads and arms”, along with other *mitzvos*. As things get tough during the final battle of Gog-Magog, they will cast off their “*mitzvah*” and run away. It is for this lack of “*l’sheim shomayim*” that they won’t be accepted in the final days. The seforim wonder about the choice of words in the *Gemara*: “*tefillin* on their heads and arms”. Isn’t the order the opposite, first arm then head? The seforim explain that this is exactly the difference between Klal Yisroel and the gentiles. The head symbolizes the element of understanding, whereas the arm refers to the actual doing. A gentile says, first with my head, i.e. I must first understand, and only after shall I do. When Klal Yisroel stood at the foot of Har Sinai, they proclaimed the opposite: first *naaseh*, and only after that *nishma*.

The foundation of *kabalas Hatorah* is that we do things because HaShem tells us to, whether we understand it or not; **כִּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה** . Accordingly, we now have a new reason why the *parsha* of the counting is read before Shavuos. We can’t figure out why HaShem needs us to perform this task, and yet Moshe does it because HaShem requested it of him, no questions asked. We read this as an introduction to our Yom Tov of accepting the Torah to remind us of how we must approach the Torah.

The Ramban notes that the literal translation

of the words **שָׂאוּ אֶת רֵאשׁוֹ** means to lift up the head. This has two possible implications, one positive and one negative. It can mean that they will be uplifted to an exalted level, or it can mean that their heads will be removed from them (see Bereishis 40:13,19 Yosef and the baker).

According to what we have said above that the head symbolizes the element of understanding, we can explain our *posuk* as follows: HaShem commanded Moshe with this seemingly pointless *mitzvah* of taking a census by saying **שָׂאוּ אֶת רֵאשׁוֹ כָּל עַדְת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל** - teach the Bnei Yisroel that when they approach the Torah and *Mitzvos*, it must be with “removing the head”, i.e. *na’aseh* and only afterwards, *nishma*.

Rav Dessler writes that the word “*moed*” which refers to Yom Tov, denotes that it is not just a Yom Tov that is *upon* us. Rather, it is an appointed time that is revisited each and every year, like a bus stop or a location that can be visited. This means that as we approach Shavuos we are about to revisit Matan Torah and Har Sinai. If we truly want to take in all that the Yom Tov has to offer, we must prepare ourselves to be a receptacle by learning to accept what Hashem asks of us with “*naase v’nishma*”.

Good Shabbos, מְרַדְכֵי אֶפְפֵּעַל



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