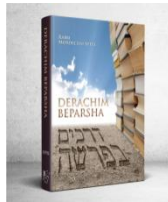


דרכים בפרשה דברים

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רב לכם שבת בהר הזה. פנו וסעו לכם

Enough of your dwelling by this mountain. Turn yourself around and journey 1:6-7

Rashi, quoting a Midrash, gives a fascinating homiletic take on the pasuk. The Midrash explains that Moshe told Bnei Yisroel: even though you've accomplished so much—receiving the Torah at Har Sinai, building the Mishkan, appointing a Sanhedrin—the time has come to journey toward the mountain of the Amorites “and all its neighbors.”

This raises a powerful question. Why move on now? Wouldn't it make more sense to stay in this holy place and safeguard the Torah they had just received, rather than venture out into the world of the umos ha'olam?

The Meforshim explain that Torah is not meant to remain isolated in a desert. It's a *leibidike* Torah—one that is lived in the world. The challenge is to remain a Yid even while surrounded by others. That, in fact, is how we answer those that ask if we are fulfilling the “mission of becoming an *Ohr la'amim*—a light unto the nations.”

We can now reread the pasuk: *Rav lachem sheves*—you've spent enough time alone in the midbar. *P'nu u'su lachem*—turn yourselves and go forth. By going out into the world, you begin to live the Torah—not just study it.

Of course, what “going out” looks like will vary from person to person. Not everyone is meant to be in the spotlight. For those more inwardly inclined, it's important to remember Rav Meir Shapira zt”l's vort (mentioned in Parshas Chukas): when we daven *V'sein b'libeinu binah... lilmod u'lelamed*—we aren't necessarily aspiring to become teachers in the formal sense. Teaching can happen without stepping into a classroom or standing behind a shtender. Every word we say, every step we take, can become a *lelamed*, a teaching moment.

Even the quietest Yid, simply through dignified behavior, can inspire awe and admiration for Hashem and His kinderlach. As the Gemara in Yoma (86a) explains on the pasuk *V'ahavta es Hashem Elokecha*—it means to make the name of Heaven beloved through your actions. How? By learning Torah, serving talmidei chachamim, and conducting your business pleasantly. What do people say about such a person? *Ashrei aviv... ashrei rabbo*—“Fortunate is his father who taught him Torah, fortunate is his rebbi.” In his own quiet way, he becomes a walking kiddush Hashem, casting a radiant light on the world.

But there's also a danger in being *too* public. Some get so caught up in being an *Ohr la'amim* that they forget to be a light to themselves. There's a risk of dilution. It's not only Yidden “out in the world” who face this—anytime a person tries to adopt a new middah, there's a question: is it coming at the expense of something else? Chessed, for example, is beautiful—but am I helping everyone *except* my own family? My own self? As cliché as it sounds, it really is true: charity begins at home.

So how do we walk this tightrope—shining Torah's light to others while not losing ourselves in the process?

The answer may lie in the next pasuk: *Rav lachem sov es hahar hazeh, p'nu lachem tzafona*—enough circling this mountain; now turn northward. The word *tzafona* is understood by the Midrash and seforim to mean “hidden.” (We find the same usage in *Tzafun* at the Seder—referring to the hidden afikoman.)

From this we can draw two deep insights.

First, the Kli Yakar famously interprets the pasuk as follows: *Rav lachem*—you have enough material blessing. *P'nu lachem tzafona*—go and hide it. Don't flaunt what you have. It's not for *tzu shtechen di oygen*. When we show off, it provokes Eisav's jealousy. The Kli Yakar notes that this is what triggers anti-Semitism—Eisav sees the brachos Yaakov “took” and assumes we're living off what should've been his. A Yid must always be modest, even in success. That's how we stay distinct.

But there's a deeper level too. *Tzafona* also refers to what's hidden *within* a person. We all have an external self—what the world sees—and an internal self. There are times when a person shows a cheerful face while silently breaking inside. Sometimes our mitzvos are polished on the outside but empty within. At other times, the outer and inner are aligned—and that's when Torah shines brightest.

How do we reach that alignment?

The Chovos HaLevavos (Sha'ar HaBitachon, ch. 4) describes the power of spending time alone. In quiet moments, we can restore the connection between the inner soul and Hashem. It's a time to pause and assess how our most important relationship is doing. In a noisy world, such moments are essential.

And perhaps that's exactly what the Torah is telling us: as much as we need to be “out there,” we also need regular reality checks—*P'nu lachem tzafona*—turn inward. Search the hidden parts of your soul. Recalibrate. Make sure your path still traces back to Har Sinai.

May we be zocheh to spread Torah's light in every direction, but never at the cost of our own inner flame.

Good Shabbos, **מרדכי אפפלי**