

Parshas Bamidbar and the Holiday of Shavuos

This week's Parsha is Bamidbar- the first parsha of the 4th book of Torah. Bamidbar generally is read before Shavuos, as it is a Parsha of census, for which Rashi explains, that Hashem counted us to show His love for us. As well, due to the possible negative things that could befall the Jews (as read in last week's Parsha- Bechukosai), we don't want to enter the holiday of receiving the Torah thinking about the negative things, rather we want to be lifted through the expression of love Hashem shows His children.

What is interesting about the counting is that the Torah repeats for every tribe their current prince, and the number of men over the age of 20. This repetition substantiates the idea that counting of the Jews is an expression of love, as every tribe got a unique "shout out" in the Torah. This expression of love matches closely to a theme of Shavuos where we "marry" Hashem- and the Torah is the binding contract between us.

Whereas prior to the Torah being given, there was no physical manifestation of the Torah on earth, but after Matan Torah, the true potential of the Jews relationship with Hashem, and the Earth's purpose was revealed. The Torah's connection to the Jews is so deep, and through practicing its ways, and bringing Torah into one's life we can achieve the deepest connection to Hashem.

As a nation, we were only able to receive the Torah after being elevated from the 49 "gates of impurity". This is manifest in the counting of the Omer which began on Pesach and culminates 49 days later- with Matan Torah. Each day is interconnected with a different Sefira- spiritual level. The first day of counting we state that it is "Chochma She'bichachma", and we conclude with "Malchus She'bimalchus". The first (and highest) level Chochma- should theoretically be culminated on the last day once we've been elevated to the level of receiving the Torah. While Malchus is the "lowest" level. Yet, the day of receiving the Torah is Malchus She'bimalchus.

I posit that the answer relates to what the Lubavitcher Rebbe famously explains in a Sichah about the Jews going into a deep slumber the night of receiving the Torah (for which we still must be "misakein"- rectify this 'mistake' by staying up all night). The Rebbe explains that since we know a portion of our soul goes to heaven when we sleep, and it returns to us when we wake in the morning (which is why we wash Negel Vaser- and say Modeh Ani in the morning among the other morning prayers). The Jews wanted their souls to receive the Torah in Heaven- where they can cleave directly to Hashem. But this intention may be right, but the method is wrong, in that Torah is "Lo Bashamayim Hi" not for the Heavens, it is a gift for this earth, and us on it¹.

¹ This being said, when we left Egypt, our minds were ready to receive the Torah perhaps, but on a wholly intellectual level.

Meaning it made sense to us to have the Torah. But if the Torah was only given on a level of Chochma, perhaps, it wouldn't have

penetrated our very fibers. Chochma is derived from the words- Koach Ma- the potential of what is, that is, it is the potential of what can be.

When we spend 49 days building ourselves and growing, and we draw each level into our very being, ultimately it leads us to the truth of recognizing Hashem as the King of Kings, master of the universe. If Torah remains only on an intellectual level, there is no way to draw the light of spirituality into this world to lead to the recognition of Hashem's mastership of the universe. One can ask, perhaps it's not so far-fetched that the Jews went to sleep either, because they weren't anxious- they knew that Hashem will be giving them the Torah, they knew this the moment they left Egypt (and it was part of their very existence knowing that Matan Torah is part of the chronology of the earth). Meaning, if you are told no matter what you're getting a present in 49 days, why worry, why be excited, you will be getting the present anyways. Therein lies the answer as to how important it is for us to allow the sefiros to positively influence our beings. Because, without permeating every level, we wouldn't have appreciated the gift that was being given to us. So, the Rebbe's answer is even stronger, which is that the Jews wanted to-without dying- bring their souls back to Hashem to show that they want to be one with the gift giver (Hashem), once they had achieved an understanding of Malchus She'bimalchus.

The "lowest level" is also the highest level. One level without the other cannot co-exist (it is called "seder Hishtalshelos"- chain link for a reason). The first of the sefiros that is often not included is Keser- crown- which is directly connected to Malchus of the next

level and vice versa. Chochma is the next level after Keser. Keser is the crown of Hashem. The cycle starts with and ends with Hashem.

Although intellectual faculties are higher in that it is what differentiates humans, and Jews from animals, the intellectual faculties alone can also make us "nifrad"- separated from Hashem in isolation. As we can use intellectual faculties to justify a human centric power that separates us from Hashem. Whereas subservience- (i.e., the form of understand there is a king over you) is a lower level than intellectual freedom. But subservience is the ultimate expression of cleaving to another power-that is us serving Hashem. Without Chochma, we cannot achieve and understanding of Malchus, and without Malchus, we would have no way to connect to Hashem on the highest level-i.e., Chochma (and the same can be said about each individual level).

When we left Egypt, we were connected with Hashem on the highest level (chochma) as the birth of the nation was in maximum potential of what could be. By the time we were ready to receive the Torah, we were fully committed to Hashem as the King of Kings, Master of the Universe. The expression of faith of fully committing ourselves to Hashem is the way we can receive the Torah and use it to permeate the fiber of our existence, for us to express our service to Hashem, and connect our Neshama to Hashem, and bring light into this world, in a way that we prepare it for a "dirah bitachtonim".

Chochma is a lifeforce that begins with every creation, it is the maximum potential expression, and therefore the highest level,

The Haftora for Bamidbar comes from Hosea 2:1-22. Hosea was considered one of the greatest prophets, and although he prophesied for a long time, he didn't have as many prophecies as Yeshayahu etc. and this sefer is therefore part of "Trei Asar". The Haftora's direct connection to the parsha is that it begins with "the number of the Jews should be like the sand of the sea". Hosea rebukes the Jews for their abandoning Hashem but gives us hope with the reunification of the Jews when Mashiach will come. The Haftora concludes with a message of "remarriage" so to speak of Hashem with the Jews. This appropriately applies to Shavuos as well. Shavuos is said to be the wedding of Hashem to the Jewish People. (Another reason why the 49 days are a 7x7 multiple of purification process, much like a husband must wait 7 days, and 7 days further of counting before he can be allowed to his wife.)

and containing the most revealed sense of Hashem. We conclude with Malchus- which is the reflection of the entire purpose. The potential that began at Keser and Chochma culminates with Malchus- with Malchus being contained in some way with Keser and Chochma. Malchus receives from all the preceding sefiros, and it contains "nothing of its own" (like the moon reflects the sun)- but it is the ultimate expression of the entire purpose that precedes it.

Malchus is the level of Shabbos (as it was by creation)- which we know Shabbos is the ultimate expression of crowing Hashem as the Master of the Universe. Shabbos is the completion of Hashem's work in creation, much like after 7x7 (sheva shabbasos temimos) we receive the Torah. As Malchus She'bimalchus, is the ultimate expression of all the potential initiated at Chochma.