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מכתב התחזקות (י"א)

Parshas Bamidbar is always leined before Shavous, and the Shulchan Aruch tells us the reason for this is that we first need to count the Yidden and only then we can observe Shavous. This needs an explanation, why is the counting of Klall Yisroel so important that it has to precede Shavous and what is its connection and significance to Kabbolas HaTorah?

The Torah tells us that only those who were יוצאי צבא were counted. Although we normally translate יוצאי צבא as those who were fit to go out to battle, the Ramban explains that this is not the meaning here. Rather יוצאי צבא refers to all those "who were able to gather together to uphold the congregation."

Rav Shimson Refoel Hirsch zt"l adds on further: "The context of יוצאי צבא does not refer to those going into the army, **rather יוצאי צבא refers to those who understand that in time of need they have to emerge from their private lives, and dedicate themselves to helping the general community.** In other words, the יוצאי צבא are those whom the public can rely on to carry out and shoulder their burden and mission."

These words have an important message for us in the current situation. At present we are also required to "emerge from our private lives, and dedicate ourselves to helping others." Heads of families have had to assume new roles, opening their own family shul, kindergarten, school, yeshiva and sem, and to be the Menahel of their own family moisdos, supervising the progress and programme of their children and overseeing their welfare. We also have a duty to ensure the wellbeing of our neighbours and members of our community, that they are coping physically and emotionally in these difficult times..



Although these new roles take much time and effort, and can detract from a person's own schedule of learning, a person should not be upset about the new seder hayom that has been imposed on us. In the sefer Maggid Meishorim, we find an instruction to Rabbeinu the Beis Yosef: **"You should not be upset that you are busy seeing to the needs of the community and thereby prevented from learning more, for both of them are important,** and through all his actions a person merits the adornment of the cloak of a talmid chochom. There is a time for learning, and a time for davening, and a time for helping the community, and one has to busy oneself with all of them."

Thus we find that the great gaon Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski zt"l, wrote the following introduction to his classic sefer Achiezer: "Until now I have delayed printing my chiddushei Torah that I have written over the years, because of the public duties that were placed on me from my younger years. **I always put the needs of the community before my own private needs, during the many years that have passed I was unable to make time for myself.** Now that I have become old, I decided that the time has finally come to see to my own needs as well."

The importance of giving of one's time to acknowledge and greet others, can be seen from Megilas Rus. When Boaz went to the field, he greeted the workers with Hashem's name and said to them ה' עמכם. The gemara (ברכות נד.) tells us that Boaz enacted a new ruling permitting using Hashem's name to greet others. We need to understand the reason behind Boaz's special ruling. We know that it is an extremely serious aveiro to mention Hashem's name in vain, so how could it possibly be justifiable to use Hashem's name as a form of greeting?

The Malbim addresses this question and explains the reason behind this special ruling. Chazal tell us that the generation of Boaz were very negligent in their behaviour towards each other, and their bein odom lechaveiro left much to be desired. Theft was common and the leaders were unable to assert their authority. Even Boaz was forced to sleep in his barn at night to safeguard his produce from robbers.

Boaz wanted that everyone should understand and appreciate that every Yid has a Tzelem Elokim, and must act with respect towards a fellow Jew. Acknowledging and greeting another Jew is such an important and lofty mitzva, that it is even permissible to use Hashem's



name to greet another Jew. In the same way as one is allowed to say Hashem's name when reciting a brocha or other tefilla, so Boaz allowed them to use Hashem's name to greet someone. A person who shows respect to others, is also engaged in avodas Hashem and performs a great mitzvah, therefore it is not considered reciting Hashem's name in vain. The famed sefer Yesod VeShoresh Ho'avoda wrote about himself: "I can testify about myself, that I had an intense joy to be able to fulfil the mitzva of loving a fellow Jew, as much as I had to be able to put on my holy Tefillin".

Through the ruling of Boaz the importance and inner kedusha of every Yid would be reinforced, and people would be more aware that every Yid is a "lebediker sefer Torah" and one has to uphold his honour and prestige. It would become self-understood that one does not have the right to belittle him in any way, or treat him negatively.

This ruling of Boaz has special significance and is also a chizuk for us as well. At the moment, normal and regular daily routines have all been suspended. Our primary concern is ensuring the welfare of others, our immediate family, neighbours, community members and the wider public. Spending time enquiring how others are faring takes much time and effort, but is a great and holy mitzva, and as the Beis Yosef was told, one should not be upset to give up ones time in order to help others.

At present many people are worried about the future, and feel isolated and trapped. A few kind words can go a long way in cheering up such a person. This was the derech of Gedolei Yisroel in every generation. A simple Jew once visited the previous Boyaner Rebbe zt"l, on erev Yom Kippur in the afternoon. He did not have anything important to discuss, and he didn't seem to realise that erev Yom Kippur is a very busy time, and many people are under great pressure to be ready on time.

The Boyaner Rebbe gave the man all the time he needed, listening to him at length, and replying to his comments. When the man eventually left, someone asked the Rebbe why he had carried on his conversation with him, and did not try to excuse himself that he couldn't manage as he has no time now?



The Rebbe answered, quoting the words of the Ramban in his famous letter (Igeres HaRamban) "תתנהג לדבר כל דבריך בנחת לכל אדם ובכל עת" "Be accustomed to speak **all** your words pleasantly, to **every** person, **all** the time". The Ramban stresses that **all** your words have to be uttered in a pleasant manner, to **every** person, even the most simple, and **all** the time, even on erev Yom Kippur!

Similarly, the Chofetz Chaim zt"l once sat many hours, listening and talking to a downtrodden person on the night of Yom Kippur. This was the holy avoda of the Chofetz Chaim on Leil Kol Nidrei, to uplift the spirits of a fellow Yid.

This madreiga is written in the Torah about Moshe Rabbeinu "ויגדל משה ויצא אל אחיו וירא" "בסבלותם" "Moshe grew up, he went out to his brothers and he saw their suffering". The sefer Tiferes Shlomo quotes the words of Chazal (תד"א פר' ד) that Moshe Rabbeinu attained his great madreigos because he was distressed about the lack of kovod for Hashem and Klall Yisroel. This is alluded to in the above possuk "ויגדל משה" when did Moshe reach the level of being a "Godol", when he realised and saw the suffering of his brothers and tried to help them, this is the sign of a true odom godol.

This in itself also forms an integral part of our preparation for kabbolas HaTorah. The Aseres Hadibros had a hundred and seventy two words, but they were not written equally on both Luchos. The first five commandments, which are mitzvos bein odom leMokom, had a hundred and thirty one words, whereas the last five commandments which are mitzvos bein odom lechaveiro, and were written on the second luach, had only forty one words.

Rabbeinu Yeshaya (commonly known as the Mabit) writes that in order that the area of the second luach should not appear more than half empty, the last five commandments were written in much larger letters than the first five, to fill up the area of the second luach. He explains that this was to reinforce the importance of mitzvos bein odom lechaveiro, and to make it easier to see the mitzvos bein odom lechaveiro, which people are quicker to find excuses for to absolve themselves from. Therefore, these mitzvos were highlighted that we should not take them lightly.



A person does not lose out by giving up his time for others. The Chasam Sofer (introduction to responsa Yoreh Deah) explains this at length and he ends off with these words: “This is a mussar for the odom hasholeim who wonders to himself, how can I give up from my time, and from working on perfecting myself in order to perfect someone else? The answer to him is that Hashem is capable of bestowing on you the sheleimus you missed out on. **In a short time, you can merit to attain great and lofty levels, more than you would ever have been able to attain with your own efforts and understanding**”.

The classic sefer Medrash Shmuel (written about 400 years ago) tells us “Just as someone who davens for others is answered first, **so too when someone learns to be able to teach others, he is answered first, and he will be taught from Heaven and the gates of the Torah are opened for him**”.

The Chortkover Rebbe zt”l explains in his sefer Ginzei Yisroel, that such a person is also held in great esteem in Shomayim. Not only does the person not lose out from their learning in this world, but also in the next world they will be highly regarded. With this concept he explains the possuk in Tehillim ‘ישגה’ יסגה “A tzaddik will flourish like a date palm, he will grow tall like a cedar tree in Lebanon”.

A cedar tree is exceedingly tall, because it does not give off any fruit, all its strength goes into its own growth, growing higher and higher. On the other hand, the palm tree produces many fruit and therefore does not grow to such tall heights.

A tzaddik who is like a palm tree and does not grow so high, because he uses his time and energy in producing fruit by teaching Torah to others, has no need to worry that his own growth has been affected and he can no longer grow as tall as he had hoped for. By giving of himself for others, he will be regarded in Shomayim as having grown to the tallest heights, because somebody who helps others never loses out.