

By Rabbi  
Warren Kasztl

## GROWTH TOWARD MATAN TORAH

Based on the Hashkafa of HaRav Shimon Kessin, SHLIT'A

In memory of

Eliyahu ben Yehuda – Dr. Elliot Hahn, Z'L

No'omi Malka bat Mordechai HaKohen, Z'L

In Parshas Bashalach, following Yetzias Mitzrayim, Hashem begins to provide Halachot to Bnai Yisroel, a process that reaches its height at Ma'amad Har Sinai. The Gemara in Sanhedrin, (56b), identifies the laws given at Mara. They are Shabbat, dinim, (laws of social justice) and the Para Adumah. Rashi explains why Parashat Mishpatim begins with a "vov": "And these add to what preceded it. Just as those are from Sinai, so too are these from Sinai". The entire process beginning in Parashat Bashalach and moving through Parashat Yitro and Mishpatim is the timeline during which we received the corpus of Mitzvot.

The obvious global question is why introduce the concept of Mitzvot via Shabbat, dinim and Para Adumah? What do these three Mitzvot as a single unit convey? To me, they represent the first step as establishing our nation as the "Mamlechet Kohanim v'Goy Kadosh" that we were destined to become. From a Kedusha perspective, these Mitzvot express that holiness must impact every part of a person's life. With Shabbat, and by extension the chagim, time is sanctified at a level not found during the rest of the week. That doesn't mean that the rest of the week should be totally chol, mundane, despite the use of the word as it relates to the workweek and the intermediate days of a chag. The Menorah in the Mishkan and Bait HaMikdash demonstrates the requirement to bring the Kedusha of Shabbat into the week with us. All the wicks pointed to the center arm of the Menorah which represents Shabbat, demonstrating that our weekday focus should center around our holy day of rest. Through Shabbat, we have the potential to sanctify the remaining six days of the week, both at home and in the workplace. It sets the tone of time-based holiness, teaching us to appreciate and embrace every moment of the week. Our secular success is not based on how much we earn, how far up the corporate ladder we climb, or how large our homes are. It's based on the spiritual impact we have on our families, friends, the people we work with and the people we daven and learn with. Hashem sanctifies Shabbat, independent of Klal Yisroel in the hope that we will take the Kedusha those twenty-five hours provide and use it to bring Kedusha to every aspect of the six days that follow.

Dinim, the laws of social justice, are laws that mankind would institute simply because they are logical and result in social order. Why, therefore, are they presented in this first exposure to Mitzvot? The reason can be understood via the Rambam's understanding of the seven Mitzvot incumbent on all mankind. The observance of those Mitzvot by the Gentile world come with a promise for those who achieve a level of righteousness through them. They will enjoy a portion in Olam HaBah. (What that portion is and their status in that portion is beyond the scope of this article.) The Rambam qualifies the achievement of righteousness with one major caveat: They have to believe that these laws come from Hashem Yisborach. If the laws make sense, why is this belief such a critical factor? The moment one believes that mankind alone is the architect of social order, the moment we remove Hashem Yisborach's authorship from the process, is the very same moment one thinks they can change the details of those laws. Permit me please to provide a clear-cut example. When I was a teenager the moral debate circled around abortion. In the 1960s there was no question that abortion was considered murder irrespective of what stage of pregnancy a woman was in. Indeed, ninety nine percent of the abortions being performed today are considered murder in the eyes of Halacha. There are circumstances when the procedure is Halachically permitted, but those are remarkably rare. If society at large recognized that, as an extension of **Hashem's command**, "thou shalt not murder", abortion is forbidden, Roe versus Wade would have never been adjudicated. Once Hashem's association with this law, (or for that part, any law), is removed, the door for mankind to impose his will is opened. Today, the governor of New York is calling for one's right to kill a newborn child immediately after it is born, if the parent(s) desire. This is why "dinim" were given at Mara. These logical laws, as given by Hashem, are there to be understood and observed – not to be manipulated to satisfy society's desires. The sad reality today is that abortion has become another form of birth control, not a procedure that addresses the health of the mother or child.

Shmot 5779

## TORAT HAR SHMUEL

by

TASHMA

harshmuel.com

sharabymail@gmail.com

TEL: 972-54-2002882

We must focus on the Mitzvah of Para Aduma given at Mara, as it serves as the foundation for everything that follows in Parashas Yisro and Mishpatim. There is a very logical question we can ask on this. The Para Aduma, the red heifer, was slaughtered and became the water that purified a person who was tamay, ritually impure because he came in contact with a deceased person. At this point, the laws of tuma and tahara had not yet been taught to Bnai Yisroel. Their ability to be part of the first Korbon Pesach in Egypt had nothing to do with whether or not they were ritually pure. Furthermore, why teach what is the ultimate “chok”, the most incomprehensible Mitzvah of the Torah at this point, before Ma’amad Har Sinai?

Let’s understand what is being taught beyond the law of Para Aduma itself. We have Mitzvos in the Torah for which the reasons are provided. Shabbos – Hashem created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Dinim, the laws of social justice are logical. For those Mitzvos that the Torah does not provide a reason, Chazal are permitted to speculate as to why they are observed. Shatnez, not mixing wool and linen, is a classic example. No reason for this is provided in the Torah. Comes the Midrash Tanchuma in Parashat Bereshit and beautifully explains that Kayin brought flax for his Korbon while Hevel brought the first-born of his flock, sheep. The two brothers brought wool and linen. Since their relationship ended in murder, the Tanchuma says Hashem never again wants to have anything to do with this mixture. Ultimately, the reason we observe every Mitzvah is because we’re commanded by Hashem Yisborach to do so. On the surface this appears very strict, when in fact it is anything but that!!

The Mitzvot we are commanded to observe, “Because Hashem Says So” are not only to avoid hurting ourselves spiritually. Mitzvah observance *maximizes* our quality of life based on the relationship we can achieve with Hashem Yisborach. There is a great proof for this. Within every Sefer Torah, there are two letters enlarged in the verse of Shema Yisroel: The ayin in the word shema and the dalet in the word echad. They spell “ayd” which means that every Mitzvah gives world-wide testimony to Hashem’s Kingship in our world (“Malkeynu”) and personal testimony to our dedicated service to His Fatherly role (“Avinu”) in our lives. If we understand our place in this divine relationship, the reward is found in reversing the two letter. They spell “da”, knowledge. The reward for giving testimony through Shmirat Ha’Mitzvot is that we will come to know and understand Hashem Yisborach.

Here is where Para Adumah comes in, and why teaching it at Mara was so important. Para Adumah teaches us to know our place, to recognize that Hashem is Infinite and we are finite. We can guess at the reasoning behind the Mitzvot, but at a certain point, and Para Aduma represents that point, we have to realize that it all comes down to serving Hashem lishmo: Hashem knows infinitely better than us how our lives should be lived. Para Adumah speaks to the concept of respecting authority, understanding limitations, recognizing that Avinu She’ba’Shamayim is infinitely more qualified to determine what’s in our best interest than are we.

Why teach Para Adumah now? Matan Torah was scheduled to take place in a few weeks. As part of the greatest event in the history of mankind, our people were going to see and experience Hashem unlike any before or after them. Preparing themselves meant, first and foremost to humble themselves. A few short weeks ago they were at the forty-ninth level of impurity, and seven weeks later, having miraculously crossed through the Red Sea, they were going to literally meet Hashem Yisborach at Har Sinai!! They are going to see the expanse of the universe unlike any since the first day of creation. They will return to the status of Adam HaRishon BEFORE he sinned. The experience will heighten them, opening the door for conceit, gaiva. Para Adumah weeks in advance of Matan Torah teaches Bnai Yisrael to know their place, to avoid letting their egos get the best of them and to remember that what we do is, “All for the Boss”!! Know your place and recognize that with proper faith in this entire process, you can let go of the vines of worry, insecurity and doubt. It is not because Hashem Yisborach will catch you, but because He never let you go in the first place. Conceptually, the vine is for the “katnay emunah”, those whose faith and understanding are immature, who think they are more qualified and capable of determining what direction their lives should take. Those who are properly faithful know that vines are unnecessary. “Ha’kol b’yday Shamayim chutz mi’yiras Shamayim”!! As mentioned earlier, if we know our place and conduct ourselves properly, “da”, the knowledge our Heavenly Father will bless us with will open our minds, enabling us to understand Hashem at the highest level we can comprehend. Rabbi Akiva, who did not begin learning until he was forty was the only man in human history to reach the full “Nun Shaaray Bina”, the fiftieth gate of understanding. His life, dedicated to Hashem, and His Torah proves this!! As Torah She’bichtav was given to us by Moshe Rabbeinu, all of Torah She’baal Peh is sourced through Rabbi Akiva.

There’s a famous story about the Bluzhover Rebbi, a Chasidic giant whose greatest challenge of faith occurred during the Holocaust. He and one Chossid were standing at a pit filled with Jews who had been gunned down by the Nazi Amalekites. The enemy soldiers looked at these two Jews and said that if they could jump across the endless pit, they would spare their lives. Although to the human eye it seemed physically impossible, they had no choice other than to rely on Hashem Yisborach and try. Miraculously - *and I do mean miraculously* - they jumped and opened their eyes to find themselves on the other side of the pit. Their lives were spared. The Rebbi looked at his lone Chossid and asked him how he made it. He told him, “You held onto Hashem Yisborach, and I held onto your coattails”. The kind of faith that results in miracles like this is not founded on trying to grasp the deep secrets that are beyond the human mind. It’s a result of humble devotion to Hashem Yisborach even though there is so much we don’t know, we cannot understand. It’s Para Adumah service, for the sake of pure love and obedience - nothing more and nothing less.

Does the “ayd” – “dah” parallel identified above apply today? The answer is an absolute yes, which I will proceed to validate. This comes with a warning. Said validation is provided to those who seriously earn the rights to the Ruchniyut side of this knowledge. Hashem blesses certain gifted individuals who know their place and define it with modesty. Knowledge of this caliber may come to a secularist scientifically for what their five senses tell them it is. They will not be able to see the spiritual implications – Hashem’s “Chosamo shel Emet, His stamp of Emet Truth - on the scientific process.

I was unsure as to how I was going to conclude this article until last evening when I received this from my Yedid Nefesh, Dr. Michael Paritzky. Dr. Yishayahu Rubinstein is a molecular biologist living in Machon Veitzman and does research on DNA cell structures. He explains that under the microscope, DNA appears like two spring shaped strands that spiral around and are attached to each other. As long as the spirals remain attached the cell is alive. Along the DNA strands, there are bridges that connect one strand to the other, keeping the cell alive. These bridges appear in a pattern: Ten acids and then a bridge, five acids and another bridge, six acids and a bridge, followed by five acids and a bridge. This pattern repeats itself throughout the DNA cell structure. In the process of trying to make sense out of the bridge pattern, Dr. Rubenstein realized something phenomenal. The number of acids between the bridges – ten, five, six, five – represents the numerical value of Hashem’s Name: Yud – Hay – Vov – Hay. As an artist places his name in the corner of a painting, Hashem’s Signature appears on every cell of our body.

The “Dah” Knowledge of Hashem is there for everyone to see. The only requirement is that we utilize the proper eyes to

glean this Divine information. When Greece defined Chochmo as

wisdom gleaned via the five senses, they removed Hashem from a process that existed from Adam until the exile of Persia when prophecy came to an end. The age of direct access and understanding of the heavenly forces of spirituality – not just physics but on a higher plane, metaphysics - morphed into the age of indirect access. What Greece failed to include was Hashem’s design, architecture, His ongoing wisdom and Hashgacha within the realm of knowledge. How much does mankind short-circuit itself by thinking that the sum total of knowledge can be gleaned via the five senses? Stephen Hawking had the ability to comprehend – with ease – the DNA science expressed above. His blindness regarding all things Hashem related prevented him from experiencing the rest of the story, the Eternal Spiritual Reality regarding the origins of the universe, beginning with the structure of a cell.

As the “Mamlechet Kohanim v’Goy Kadosh”, Hashem promises us that if we see the world through the eyes He blessed Knesset Yisroel with, the extent of “Dah” based knowledge that results from our “AyD” based testimony will not only be endless, but rich beyond comparison. We will not only comprehend the factual knowledge of what Hashem created, but will see the Divine Unity in that picture. When Einstein revealed the theory of relativity, the innovation of his discovery was in the unification of concepts that existed before his time. A Jew, more than anyone, enjoys greater worthiness in understanding the unity within the briya. When we do our part, Hashem is delighted to do His. May all of us be zoche to be unified as a nation and understand the unity of the briya that Hashem continues to “Create” everyday.