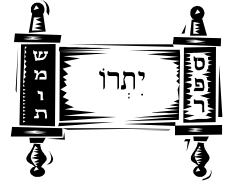




KINDER TORAH®



For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table - Parshas Yisro
מוקדש לע"נ טובא צפרה בת חיים צבי ע"ה, ולע"נ דינה בת יעקב מאיר ע"ה
ולע"נ הרב יהושע העשיל בן אברהם אליעזר ז"ל

Preparation

“And they (the Jewish people) traveled from Refidim and came to the Sinai Desert. (The nation of) Israel camped there in front of the mountain” (Shemos 19:2). Thus begins the Torah’s account of the singular even in Jewish history: the receiving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. Why does the Torah choose to begin with their departure from Refidim? Is it necessary to tell us this fact? The Netziv zt”l in his commentary entitled “HaEmek Davar” quotes the Mechilta. They came to the Sinai Desert was in order to receive the Torah. Similarly, they departed from Refidim in order to receive the Torah. The preparation actually began with their departure. We learn an important lesson from this. In all matters of holiness, greater preparation makes a person more fitting to receive what Hashem wants to give him.

The Netziv actually brings a proof from the famous story of Rebbe Chiya (Bava Metzia 85b), who went to great lengths to insure that the Jewish people did not forget the Torah. He began by planting flax and making nets from the cords of linen. He trapped deer in the nets, *shechted* them and fed the meat to orphans. He made the skins into parchments and wrote the five books of the Torah on them. He then went around to each city that did not have teachers for little children. He found five children and taught them each one book of the Torah. He then found six children and taught them each one *seder* of *Mishnayos*. He then instructed each of them to teach all of the others his section. In this way, he spread Torah throughout the Jewish people. “Why did he have to go to so much trouble?” asks the Netziv. “He could have bought animal skins and tanned them himself.” Rebbe Chiya wanted to increase the “*kedusha* (holiness) power” of those parchments so that they would have maximum impact on the hearts of the students. Therefore, he began investing them with *kedusha* from the very beginning, with each step of the preparation. All of his *kavannas* (intentions) from the very beginning were *lishaim Shomayim* (for the sake of Heaven) for the education of those children.

Kinderlach . . .

How do we prepare ourselves for a mitzvah? Let us say that Shacharis (morning prayer) begins at 7:00. Hmm. If I arrive at 7:10 I can skip and speed through the introductory prayers. I will catch up in time to start the Amidah a little after the congregation. Hmm. Would Rebbe Chiya have done that? Give yourself enough time to say all of the prayers properly and with kavannah. You will see that your prayers are much more meaningful. What about preparing for Shabbos? We should try to finish all of our Shabbos preparations as early as possible. Don't wait for the last minute to take your Shabbos bath. Help Imma and Abba to prepare the food and the house. You can even begin early in the week. Just keep in mind to have kavanna (intention) for the honor of Shabbos. Then you are putting even more *kedusha* (holiness) into Shabbos. Kinderlach, enjoy the Holy Day!

The Appropriate Place

The giving of the Torah. Hashem comes down to this world to reveal Himself to the Jewish people. Monumental, spectacular, momentous -- adjectives are inadequate to describe this event. Where is the appropriate setting for such an event to take place? How about the breathtaking landscape of the Swiss Alps? Certainly a beautiful backdrop, but not quite right for the occasion. What about the beach of the Mediterranean Sea? The clear blue rolling waves are an impressive testimony to Hashem’s brilliant artistry of this world. True, but not appropriate for the giving of the Torah. How about the fertile fields of the Nile River valley? A place lush with Hashem’s vegetation. True, but something is still missing. No, the perfect place for this cataclysmic event is . . . the desert. The desert? A desolate place with no wildlife, vegetation, or water? Yes, the desert. Well, there are many breathtaking spots in the desert. Tall mountains that rise from sand dunes. It must have been on one of those beautiful majestic desert mountains. No, the giving of the Torah was on Mt. Sinai. A very low mountain. That is the place that Hashem chose to give the

Torah.

“And they (the Jewish people) traveled from Refidim and came to the Sinai Desert. (The nation of) Israel camped there in front of the mountain” (Shemos 19:2). The Keli Yakar zt”l comments that when they left Refidim they were not yet ready to receive the Torah. They were fighting in Refidim. The Torah can only be given when there is peace among the Jewish people. That is why the Torah was given in the third month (Sivan) whose mazal is twins, the sign of love between people. They traveled from Refidim, meaning they distanced themselves from the fighting, and they came to the Sinai Desert. This placed was ideal to establish peace among them. Fighting comes from a desire for honor. When they saw that Hashem chose Mt. Sinai, a very low mountain, as the place for the giving of the Torah, they realized that Hashem favors humble people. Therefore, they humbled themselves and established peace.

Kinderlach . . .

Now we see how important peace is. Without peace, there can be no Torah. How do we work on establishing peace in our lives? By humbling ourselves. On most disagreements, give in to the other person. Let him have it his way. Even if you think you are right. Making peace is what is truly right. Let everyone at the Shabbos table describe a situation where he made peace. Tell a different story next week, and the week after. Soon it will become second nature. Kinderlach, the skill of making peace with people is one of the most important things that you can learn in your whole lives!

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