



# CLASSIC DAF KESHER

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## PARSHAT BECHUKOTAI (CHU"l), BAMIDBAR(ISRAEL)

פרשת בחוקותי (חול"ל) במדבר (א"י)

DVAR TORAH – BECHOKOTAI – CHU"l

### QUANTITY CAN CHANGE QUALITY

Hashem blesses the People of Israel: "Five of you will chase a hundred; and a hundred of you will chase ten-thousand (Vayikra 26:8)."

Rashi, on that verse, asks the obvious question: The arithmetic of this verse seems flawed. Five Israelites chasing a hundred enemies is a one-to-twenty ratio. It should have followed that a hundred Israelites should only be able to chase two thousand enemies. How do a hundred manage to chase a hundred-thousand?"

Rashi answers that the difference between five and a hundred is not only quantitative. Even though 100 is only 20 times 5, 100 soldiers are, qualitatively, 100 times more powerful than 5 (100 times 100 equals 10,000). A change in quantity can bring about a change in quality. Here's another example: A kosher mikveh must contain 40 סאה (a סאה is Talmudic measure of volume; estimates range from 8 to 14 liters) of naturally gathered rainwater. Adding one סאה to a mikveh with 10 or 20 or 30 סאה effects a mere quantitative change. But adding one סאה to a mikveh with 39 סאה transforms it into a kosher mikveh; a small change in quantity creates a massive change in quality.

In Rashi's own words, "אינו דומה מועטין העושין את התורה למרובים העושין את התורה" – "There is no comparison between a small group fulfilling the Torah and a large group fulfilling the Torah." "You see from this the power of numbers," said the Chofetz Chaim. When a large communal group gets involved in Torah and mitzvot it is so much more powerful and far-reaching than a small one."

The Chofetz Chaim once built a speech around this theme at a gathering of Vaad Hayeshivot (an organization started in Eastern Europe to strengthen and finance yeshivot).

Business partners, he began, periodically evaluate their successes and failures and analyze what caused them, in order to plan future business projects.

The people of Israel became partners in Torah at Mount Sinai, when they received the Torah "as one man with one heart." As partners, we must periodically gather in order to evaluate the state of Torah in our generation. We must try to assess what we have done right, see where we went wrong, and analyze the causes of both.

He remembered how the great Lithuanian Jewish community of Minsk, had once housed thirty full Batei-Midrash where the sound of Torah was heard day and night. The state of Torah there had digressed to the point where serious Torah learning was limited to within the walls of Minsk's yeshivot. However, just as their numbers had decreased, they could increase, resulting in qualitative change. He closed by inspiring the assemblage to support and increase Torah study, in order to bring back the power of the group, the power of numbers.

## DVAR TORAH - BAMIDBAR (ISRAEL)

### ORDER AND HONOR

In the beginning of the Book of Bamidbar, the camp of Israel is precisely ordered, everyone is counted and associated with a particular family, and every tribe assigned a particular place in the camp. As we read the first few parshiot of Bamidbar, we feel the regimentation and order. This strict order is closely associated with honor. Moshe, Aharon and his sons, and the tribe of Levi are in the midst of the camp. The four camps of Israel also seem to be ordered by honor, with Machaneh Yehudah, the Camp of Yehudah, composed of the tribes Yehudah, Yissachar and Zevulun, on the eastern side of the camp. Why does the Torah so emphasize order and honor at the beginning of Bamidbar?

Harav Meir Simchah of Dvinsk, זצ"ל, in his Meshech Chochmah commentary on the Chumash, states a principle: It is the honor of the Divine Presence in the midst of the camp that dictates an entire system of regal honor. Honor accompanies Hashem's kedushah, His holiness. As the angels call out: "קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' צבאות מלא כל הארץ" – "Holy, holy, holy is Hashem of hosts, the entire world is full of His honor" (Yishayahu 6:3). Hashem is holy, and that holiness is associated with honor. Even outside the realm of kedushah, the presence of a central dignified person creates the need for concentric circles of honor; with those closest to him receiving more honor and others falling into place according to their closeness.

Thus the Meshech Chochmah explains an anecdote that appears in the Gemara (Berachot 47a). Ravin and Abbaye were travelling together. While they were travelling Ravin did not show Abbaye honor; only when they reached the door of the Beit Midrash he showed deference to Abbaye. "איין מכבדין בדרכים" – "We don't show honor while traveling," when detached from a context of kedushah, from the central source of honor. Once they reached the Beit Midrash, though, the need for honor returns.

This also explains why we are so particular honoring people through giving them aliyot during the Torah reading. We even pay close attention to order their aliyot based on honor. This is because during the Torah reading we focus on the regal Divine Presence that accompanies the Torah. This touches off the entire system of honor, for when the King is present, everyone else falls into place somewhere in His court.

This presents a difficulty, though, says the author of the Meshech Chochmah. We usually do not show honor while traveling. Why does the Torah pay so much attention to the order of the camp of Israel while traveling?

He answers that because the Divine Presence traveled along with them, the entire system of honor and order had to be retained during their journey, not only when they encamped. As Israel traveled through the desert they were the entourage of the King. Not only did the Divine Presence travel with them; but the Tent of Meeting retained its status throughout the journey. This, says the Meshech Chochmah, is the basis of the following opinion in the Talmud (Menachot 95a): The **לחם הפנים**, the showbreads, would be prohibited to eat if, when removed from the Table, they left the **מחנה שכינה**, the Camp of the Divine Presence. But while the Jews were traveling through the desert the showbreads were **not** rendered invalid, for the breads were never considered to have left their designated area. The proof – "The Tent of Meeting traveled" (Bamidbar 2:17): Even when it traveled, it was still the Tent of Meeting" (Menachot 95a).

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## SOURCE GUIDE: VAYIKRA VS. BAMIDBAR

This Shabbat the Jews in Israel begin Bamidbar, while the Jews outside Israel read Parshat Bechukotai, and thus finish the book of Vayikra. Let us zoom out and take a look at the contrast between the entire books of Vayikra and Bamidbar. We'll especially note key differences in order and style.

### A. The Opening of Vayikra vs. the Opening of Bamidbar

Note the differences between the opening of Vayikra and the opening of Bamidbar:

<p><b>1. Vayikra 1:1</b> He called out to Moshe, and Hashem said to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying ...</p>	<p><b>ויקרא א:א</b> וַיִּקְרָא אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלָיו מֵאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֵאמֹר ...</p>
<p><b>2. Bamidbar 1:1</b> Hashem said to Moshe in the Sinai Desert in the Tent of Meeting on the first of the second month in the second year of the Exodus from the Land of Egypt, saying ...</p>	<p><b>במדבר א:א</b> וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי בְּאֹהֶל מוֹעֵד בְּאֶחָד לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בַשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיית לְצֵאתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר.</p>

Let us focus on two of the differences between these two verses:

- The verse in Bamidbar gives a date, the first day of the second month - Rosh Chodesh Iyar – in the second year, whereas no date is mentioned in Vayikra. In fact, the Torah does not mention the calendar date at all in the entire Book of Vayikra. The seven days of preparation and “the eighth day” (Vayikra 9:1) appear, as well as “after the death of Aharon’s sons” (Vayikra 16:1) – but no calendar date appears.
- The verse in Bamidbar gives the geographical setting, “in the Sinai Desert,” in addition to the Tent of Meeting. In the first verse of Vayikra only the Tent of Meeting appears.

### B. Laws & Stories, Stories & Laws

The contrast between these two opening verses points to a much broader difference between these two Chumashim: **Vayikra is organized topically while Bamidbar is organized chronologically.** This explains why the Torah gives the time and place at the beginning of Bamidbar, but suffices with telling us at the beginning of Vayikra that Hashem called out to Moshe from the Tent of Meeting.

A corollary: Vayikra contains mostly laws, halachot, but weaves in two stories; whereas the backbone of Bamidbar is the story of the Jews’ travels from Mount Sinai to the gates of the Land of Israel, but halachot are interspersed where appropriate. Look at the following two charts to feel the difference:

Parshah	Laws	Narratives
Vayikra	Voluntary offerings Sin offerings	
Tzav	Olah, Minchah, Chatat, Asham, Shelamim Induction of Aharon and his sons Dedication of the Mishkan	
Shemini	Dedication of the Mishkan	Dedication of the Mishkan Death of Nadav and Avihu
	Kosher and non-kosher animals Purity and Impurity of animals	
Tazria	Tzaraat: People and Clothing	
Metzora	Purification from Tzaraat Tzaraat of Houses	
	Zav, Shichvat Zera, Zavah, Niddah	
Acharei Mot	Yom Kippur Service Sacrifices Outside the Temple Prohibition against Blood Forbidden Sexual Relations – Arayot	
Kedoshim	Laws for Israelites Punishments for Arayot	
Emor	Laws for Kohanim Shabbat and Holidays Candles and Showbreads	
		Man Who Cursed the Divine Name in the camp
Behar	Shemittah and Yovel and Related Laws	
Bechukotai	Blessings and Rebuke Donations	

Parshah	Laws	Narratives
Bamidbar	Flags and camp	Census

		Genealogy of Levi, Choice of Leviim
	Service of Kehat	
<b>Naso</b>	Service of Gershon and Merari	
	Removing Impure from the Camp	
	Returning Theft	
	Sotah	
	Nazir	
	Blessing of Kohanim	
		Dedication of Heads of Tribes
<b>Behaalotcha</b>	Menorah	
		Purification of the Leviim
		Pesach and Impure Men
	Pesach Sheni	
		Movement of the Cloud
	Chatzotzerot	
		The Cloud Moves & Camp Travels
		Moshe Invites Chovav
		The Complainers & the Desirers
		The Seventy Elders
		The Quails and the Manna
		Miriam's Leprosy
<b>Shelach</b>		The Spies
	Grain, Oil, and Wine Offerings	
	Chalah	
	Sin Offering for Idolatry	
		The Wood Gatherer
	Tzitzit	
<b>Korach</b>		Korach Rebellion
	Gifts to Kohanim	
<b>Chukat</b>	Parah Adumah, Impurity of the Dead	
		Miriam's Death, Massah & Merivah
		Encounter with Edom
		Death of Aharon, Travels of Israel
		Wars with Sichon and Og
<b>Balak</b>		Balak and Bilam
		Daughters of Midian
<b>Pinchas</b>		Pinchas's Blessing
		2nd Census
		Daughters of Tzelafchad
	Laws of Inheritance	
		Appointment of Yehoshua
	Daily, Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh Sacrifices	
	Holiday Sacrifices	
<b>Matot</b>	Vows	
		War with Midian
	Gentile Vessels	
		Spoils of War
		Gad, Reuven, and Half of Menasheh
<b>Masei</b>		Israel's Travels through the Desert
	Borders & Division of the Land of Israel	
	Cities of Refuge and Accidental Murder	
		Daughters of Tzelafchad Part II

We can see why Chazal referred to the law-filled Book of Vayikra as תורת כהנים; it is essentially a collection of halachot, of torot. The Book of Bamidbar, on the other hand, is referred to as חומש הפקודים: its narrative is framed by the two censuses, פקודים, that appear in Parshat Bamidbar and Parshat Pinchas (see the Netziv's introduction to Bamidbar, where he explains how the two censuses highlight the transition from G-d's direct Divine Providence early in the desert, to the less direct Providence as they approach the Land of Israel).

**Question on Vayikra: Why does the episode of the מקלל, the cursing man, appear in the Book of Vayikra?**

Chazal tell us (Midrash Torat Kohanim 14:5) that the episodes of the מקושש, the wood gatherer, and the man who cursed the Divine Name in the camp took place at the same time. Why, then, isn't the cursing man episode in Parshat Shelach along with the wood gatherer? We understand why the Kohanim's induction and the death of Nadav and Avihu appear in Vayikra, Torah Kohanim; but why the mekalel?

**Question on Bamidbar:** How does each halachah that appears in Bamidbar relate to the narrative that precedes and follows it? For some – like Challah or the sacrifices for Shabbat and holidays - we can even ask: Why is this halachah placed in Bamidbar and not in Vayikra?

## LOOKING INSIDE BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

During Sefirat Haomer we remember the students of Rabbi Akiva who “didn’t relate to each other with the proper honor,” and ask ourselves: What is honor, and how do we relate to others with honor?

The word כבוד, honor, is related to the word כבד, weighty. Giving kavod means appreciating something’s significance, its weightiness, and relating to it accordingly. It means not taking something lightly, not detracting from its worth, weight, and significance.

When we look at people around us it is sometimes difficult to relate with kavod. We often see their weaknesses, even of those considered honorable people of position. What makes it difficult for us to give kavod is that we tend to focus on externals, what a person is showing to the outer world. Relating based on externals presents us with two problems: First of all, people’s externals may not be so pretty. That makes it easy to find faults, to minimize and satirize. Secondly, if we just look at externals we don’t focus on the important part of a person. If we give kavod to a person because of his good looks or money or some other external characteristic, we’re not really honoring the essence of the person, who he really is.

The Gemara (Pesachim 50a) tells us that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi’s son Rav Yosef had a near-death experience. When he came back to this world his father asked him, “What did you see?” He replied, “עולם הפוך ראיתי” – “I saw an upside down world. The people who in this world are treated as lofty and given honor are lowly in the World of Truth; and those who are lowly, looked down upon, and not respected in this world are considered lofty in the World of Truth.

We have to be careful not to let the external aspects of this world lead us astray. Otherwise we’ll find ourselves honoring that which doesn’t deserve it and failing to give honor to that which really does. What is serious and truly worthy of respect and honor is what is hidden, the פנימיות, the inner essence, the Tzelem Elokim, the Divine image within. That should be the focus of our relationships.

Harav Chaim Shmuelevitz, זצ”ל (1902-1979, Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva) used to give a shmuze that focused on kibud av va’em, honoring parents, but is relevant to all of our interactions and relationships. In that shmuze, Rav Chaim shared a yesod, a fundamental idea. To truly fulfill kibud av va’em, he said, you must find some attribute about your parent that in your eyes makes him or her very, very special. You must find some essential point about which you can say, “In this area my father or mother is **חד בדרא**, unique in the generation.” Hashem created every individual unique, and we must search for that unique inner point within a person in order to relate with the proper kavod.

Being able to give kavod is a middah, a character trait we can and must develop. It is the ability to recognize a person as a Tzelem Elokim, created in the image of G-d. If we develop this middah we’ll look at the world differently, and not fall into patterns of cynicism, doubt, and leitzanut, not taking things seriously. When we cut through the externals covering up a person, we can then see what really makes him tick and find something beautiful, spiritual, and truly worthy of respect.

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שבת שלום ומבורך

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