

DARCHAI NOAM - דרכי נועם

“Its ways are ways of pleasantness”

(Mishlei 3:17)

Tetzaveh
February 2018 / Adar 5778

darchai.noam@gmail.com
www.divreitorah.net/darchai-noam

How can the Parsha help us grow this week?

Tetzaveh – putting in the effort

In this week's Parsha of Tetzaveh we continue to learn about the making of the Mishkan and its utensils and the various tasks involved in the Jewish people's Divine service there.

In last week's Darchai Noam we discussed the comparison between the Mishkan and the Revelation at Har Sinai. We explored the Ramban's explanation that Har Sinai had a dual function – it served as a resting place for the Divine Presence and it was the place where Hashem communicated with Moshe and provided Bnei Yisrael with mitzvot. We cited the Ramban's teaching that the Mishkan also had the same dual function. The Ramban taught that the Mishkan was a portable continuation of the Revelation at Har Sinai. Bnei Yisrael could in effect package this Divine experience and carry it with them throughout their travels. Ultimately, when Bnei Yisrael would enter the Land of Israel, the Bet Hamikdash was meant to be the final destination for the Mishkan and a permanent reminder of the Revelation at Har Sinai.

Let's compare further the Mishkan / Bet Hamikdash with Har Sinai.

Back in Parshat Yitro, we saw that Hashem told Moshe to warn Bnei Yisrael not to approach Har Sinai during the Revelation:

“And you shall make boundaries around [the mountain] for the people and say to them ‘Guard yourselves from ascending the mountain or touching its edge. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely die’” (Parshat Yitro, Shmot 19:12.)

However, as soon as the Revelation was finished, a shofar sounded signalling that the Mountain was no longer holy. As Rashi explains: “Once I [Hashem's Presence] have departed, they are permitted to ascend the mountain”.¹ This reveals that as soon as the Revelation was over Har Sinai was transformed back from the holiest place on earth to a standard mountain. In fact, those who visit the Sinai Peninsula even today can take a guided tour to the top of Har Sinai!²

On the other hand, the holiness of the Mishkan and the Bet Hamikdash is more permanent. This can be seen from the following:

- The Aron Hakodesh that was fashioned by Moshe was used throughout the times of the Mishkan and the first Bet Hamikdash. It was hidden away before the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash (together with many of the other utensils) and will be used again in the times of the Moshiach.
- One of the explanations for why Hashem did not let David Hamelech build the Bet Hamikdash is that had he built it, it would have been eternal and Hashem would not let it be destroyed. Hashem knew that Bnei Yisrael would ultimately sin and need to be punished. Hashem preferred to wipe out a physical building rather than wipe out Bnei Yisrael so he needed a structure that he could demolish as retribution for their sins.³ A similar explanation has been suggested in relation to why

¹ Rashi's commentary to Parshat Yitro, Shmot 19:13.

² However, there is considerable uncertainty as to which mountain is the authentic Har Sinai.

³ Midrash Shocher Tov, Tehillim 62.

Moshe did not enter the Land of Israel, because he would have built the eternal Bet Hamikdash. Everything that Moshe created was perfect and eternal and Hashem would not let it be destroyed.

- The Har Habayit, the site of the Bet Hamikdash, retains its holiness even until today. Almost 2000 years after the destruction of the second Bet Hamikdash, Jews are forbidden to step on the holy places.⁴

Why is there such a distinction in the permanency of the holiness of Har Sinai and the Mishkan / Bet Hamikdash? Perhaps one reason is due to the difference between how much effort was invested by Bnei Yisrael. Har Sinai was like a 'free gift'. Hashem descended temporarily onto the mountain to give Bnei Yisrael His Torah and then He departed. Bnei Yisrael were passive. In contrast, Bnei Yisrael put a lot of effort into building the Mishkan and the Bet Hamikdash. These edifices represent what can be achieved by human effort (under Divine guidance of course). When we invest our enterprises with hard work and holy intentions, the effects can be long-lasting.

Rabbi Akiva Tatz explains this phenomenon in terms of three stages that are apparent throughout life: the 'free gift', the 'hard work' and the 'ultimate reward'. For example, when first learning to walk, a baby must hold his parent's hand. However, the parent understands that the baby will never learn to walk independently this way. Therefore, the parent lets go of the hand... and the baby inevitably falls and cries. Eventually though, after much effort, the baby learns to walk on its own. This form of walking is much more permanent and successful due to the baby's own efforts. The baby would love to continue holding its parent's hand and at first is scared to walk on its own. However, the baby will never learn to walk without putting in the independent effort.

The contrast between the temporary holiness of Har Sinai and the more permanent holiness of the Mishkan / Bet Hamikdash teaches us the importance of putting in hard work and investing effort. We can apply this lesson to all aspects of our lives. For example, when helping a co-worker to learn a new skill or coaching a child with a difficult school subject, we have to start off by showing them what to do. However, the only way to really teach them and to allow them to become self-sufficient, is to step back and give them room for trial and error and to practice by themselves. If we don't give them the chance to put in their own effort, they will not be able to reach their potential.

Human nature is such that we feel most rewarded and appreciate things most when we have put in the hard work and effort. The only way to really accomplish anything – whether it is learning a new skill, performing a difficult mitzvah or working on our spiritual development – is to put in the effort.

The Vilna Gaon teaches us that improving our middot is the purpose of life.⁵ It is hard work to improve our middot. Very hard work. But it is only through our own efforts that we can do so.

Let's try something this week:

1. When helping someone else to learn a new skill, remember to also give them room to put in their own effort.
2. Remember that we are in this world to work on ourselves and improve our middot. That requires lots of effort and hard work. Let's roll up our sleeves and get started!

Shabbat shalom,

Rabbi Ledder

*** **

⁴ Some poskim allow Jews to ascend to certain areas of the Har Habayit but only if they are careful to stick to the permitted areas and have prepared themselves appropriately (e.g. going to the mikvah). Many poskim forbid Jews to ascend the Har Habayit at all because of the uncertainty as to which areas are permitted.

⁵ Commentary to Mishlei 4:13.

About Darchai Noam

Darchai Noam is available online at www.divreitorah.net/darchai-noam. You can access this week's edition of Darchai Noam, archived back issues of Darchai Noam and other divrei Torah.

The pasuk in Mishlei (3:17) describes the Torah as follows: "Its ways are ways of pleasantness (Darchai Noam) and all its paths are peace". The Torah is our guidebook for life. It is packed full of good advice as to how we should live our lives.

The aim of the Darchai Noam weekly email is to examine an idea from the weekly parashah relating to good middot (character traits). It will focus particularly on treating each other with respect and how to interact with each other in a more peaceful and pleasant manner. It will also suggest some practical tips for implementing these ideas in our daily lives.

By learning together each week, and making an effort to regularly put the ideas into practice, with Hashem's help we can all gradually improve our character traits and our observance of 'v'ahavta l're'echa kamocho' – loving one's fellow as oneself.

If you know someone who might enjoy receiving this email please feel free to pass it on to them or email me their details so I can add them to the subscription list.

You are welcome to use the content of this email in any way that will help to spread the learning of Torah. However please attribute credit appropriately.

Many of the ideas that I use in Darchai Noam are based on ideas that I read or heard from various sources. Where possible I try to quote the source. However, in some cases I cannot recall the source. For that I apologise. If I do discuss an idea that I heard from somewhere else, any errors are purely my own.

Darchai Noam is available online at www.divreitorah.net/darchai-noam. You can access this week's edition of Darchai Noam, archived back issues of Darchai Noam and other divrei Torah.

How to subscribe or unsubscribe

If you would like to subscribe or unsubscribe to Darchai Noam, please send an email to darchai.noam@gmail.com with the word 'subscribe' or 'unsubscribe' in the subject.