

## Parshat Yitro 5778

Perek 19 states :

1. In the third month of the children of Israel's departure from Egypt, on this day they arrived in the desert of Sinai. **א בחודש השלישי לצאת בני ישראל מארץ מצרים ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני**

2. **They journeyed from Rephidim**, and they arrived in the desert of Sinai, and **they encamped in the desert**, and **Israel encamped there opposite the mountain.** **ב ויסעו מרפידים ויבאו מדבר סיני ויחנו במדבר ויחננו בשם ישראל נגד ההר**

This is the beginning of the preparation for Matan Torah . We know they arrived at Sinai in posuk 1 so what does posuk 2 add? Beshalach tells us they were in Refidim. Obviously they encamped and why mention where? It seems posuk 2 is redundant or should precede posuk 1. Rashi says the importance of reiterating is to compare their travel from Refidim to their arrival at Sinai i.e. both were in a state of Teshuva. Rashi famously says on the word **ויחנן** ( singular ) that they were ' **כאיש אחד בלב אחד** ', 'as one man with one heart' , yet in last week's sedra the Egyptians are described similarly when they pursued Bnei Yisrael into the sea , **נִסַּע אַחֲרֵיהֶם** (Shemos 14:10) , Rashi comments ' **בלב אחד כאיש אחד** ', 'with one heart , like one man.' .

The Netziv in haEmek Davar says that receiving the Torah required such vast preparation that even from when they left Refidim they had to be in a state of 'teshuva shelaimah' . Similarly anything requiring success in ruchniyos demands extensive preparation. The more preparation done with the correct intentions, the greater the success. This idea can be extended to individual mitzvos.

“Nor does he take pleasure in the legs of man” (Tehillim קמז, verse 10). Hashem wants us to do the mitzvos but quality mitzvos, not merely done with our limbs but with heart and feeling .The preparation for the mitzvah is what makes man unique. **ויסעו מרפידים** teaches us the vital importance of preparation for and investment in mitzvos . This is what is so beloved to Hashem. Hashem does not want robotic performance from us, He has angels for that.

**הִכּוּן לַקְרָאת אֱלֹהֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל**: prepare yourself to meet your G-d, O Israel. (Amos 4:12). Rav Pincus describes the scramble when people suddenly realise it's almost sunset and they haven't davened mincha. Anything done without the proper kavonah will be in some way lacking, whereas 'great are the achievements through preparation' . Thus before

every mitzvah one should at least think if not say 'behold I'm about to give Tzedaka, to make Kiddush etc' and not just to 'fall' into the mitzvah. Rav Pincus says this also works for aveiros e.g. we should think or say 'behold I'm about to speak loshen hara, behold I am about to lie' etc. If we develop this mindset then it will protect us from aveiros aswell!

The Ohr HaChaim HaKodesh says that these pesukim need to be understood in a metaphysical light. 3 things were necessary for kabbolas HaTorah:

- **They had to leave Refidim**, and distance themselves from the weakness or laxness (רפיון) in learning Torah so they had to invest in Torah learning and be moser nefesh for Torah.
- **They encamped in the wilderness**. This alludes to the trait of humility which according to Ramban' This radiant quality is the finest of all admirable traits '(see Avodah Zarah 20b), (Mishlei 22:4) . Torah is only found in the humble ( Eruvin 54)
- **And Israel encamped there opposite the mountain** . Unity , love and peace . To be able to empathise and share in the joys and sorrows of others. Rabbi Pliskin says that humility means you feel no need to gain power over others or to feel above them by focussing on their faults which thus allows you to see their real goodness.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, says, quoting the Sforno, that the preparation at Har Sinai was that every person looked out for and had concern for their fellow. This starkly contrasts with the Egyptian unity which was based on negativity and hatred. The sheer positive unity of Bnei Yisrael merited revelation. The Avnei Nezer points out ( Avos 5:19) that love predicated on external factors , when they disappear, the love is gone; unlike love not dependent on specific factors which will never cease. This is an example of unity of common purpose (Egypt) versus endless unity that transcends agendas.

Rav Belsky says that their state of divisiveness at Refidim was characterized by relative laxity re the source of their cohesiveness; they had lost sight of the unifying vision of Torah which left them vulnerable to fragmentation. True unity can only be achieved when there is a common goal far greater than the goal of any one individual ...to the point that the needs of the individual are nullified in deference to achieving the common vision ...becoming like a single individual with a clear goal . Surrendering to this higher vision was the essence of their great act of Teshuva . Posuk 1 is the ideal, to get to Sinai, to have the passion and love for Torah. The second posuk explains the way to get there, **but first and foremost is the unwavering passion for Torah.**  
Based on a shuir by Rebbetzin Shira Smiles.