



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

by Zevvy Goldish

This week's *parasha* is *Bamidbar*. *Bnei Yisroel* has been camping out at *Har Sinai* for a year, learning Torah. Now they are ready to head out into the desert, on their way to Israel. A census is taken of all the families according to their tribe. This is the beginning of *Bnei Yisroel's* forty year journey through the desert.



For me, this year is like the year at *Har Sinai*. I really feel like I received the Torah this year. Before, Torah was something that belonged to rabbis, and I wasn't responsible for its preservation or perpetuation—if I had questions, I went to the rabbi. Even when I would study Torah in school, it was usually for a test. I never really worked hard to develop a relationship with Torah--it wasn't really mine. But how does one develop a relationship with Torah?

The way to develop any relationship is by giving. The essence of this world is time and effort—the more time and effort you invest in something, the more your essence becomes a part of it—the more you love it. Everyone came into this year with their own struggles with God, Judaism, and life in general. But one thing we all have in common is we've spent this year investing time, day and night, in the study of Torah. And whether or not you find your questions answered, or just have even more questions - that time spent is what creates a relationship with Torah, that will hopefully last for the rest of our lives.

Everyone has limited time in this world, and therefore limited available effort. Some people want to "see it all"; but this is impossible, since there is always more to see. At some point you have to sit down and decide what it is you want to invest your time in, for that is what will define you when your time is up. And if you spend your life jumping from one thing to another, or trying to give everything to everybody, you stretch yourself too thin, and don't develop that relationship with anything. Therefore, one needs to decide what his focus in life is going to be, and make that his focus.

This is the next step—we may have all developed a relationship with Torah this year, but that's because it has been our primary focus this year. What will

be our focus in the future? As we all prepare for our desert journey, now is the time to make that decision. And don't think you can have two primary focuses. Only an infinite being can divide into two and have each half be the whole thing; we are finite beings. That is why a man marries one woman—because if he married more than one, by definition of the finite neither would receive his full devotion. Not to say don't do anything in life—but the question you must ask is, am I putting more effort into making money than into Torah? If so, which are you married to?

Everyone's pretty tired today at Orayta. Is it the heat? Maybe it's because of the twenty-four hour non-stop dancing on *Yom Yerushalayim*. Either way, now is the time to really squeeze the most out of our last three weeks here. If you really want the most for yourself, you'll put in the effort—because if you can't put effort into yourself, who will you exert yourself for?

Sefer Bamidbar is also known as *Chumash HaPikudim*—the book of the census. *Hashem* counts each and every one of us to show his love for us. And despite all the fighting and complaining we do throughout the *Sefer*, it is named for *Hashem's* love—because that struggle and that effort is precisely what develops that love between us and *Hashem*. It was “easy” for *Hashem* to perform miracles and take us out of Egypt—but if He really wants to acquire us, He has to struggle with us disobeying Him—that's how He becomes invested with us. But if we don't put the effort back in to become invested with Him, then we'll never develop the love from our side of the relationship.

Soon everyone will be off on their path, and the year will not be devoted specifically to Torah—but this year is what starts off the journey, and the love we developed for Torah and for each other should be the pervading theme for the rest of our lives. Through the ups and the downs, I hope we can all maintain this connection to Torah which connects us to the entire Jewish people, and continue struggling and developing that relationship forever.

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