

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

PARSHAS
BAMIDBAR

בְּשֵׁבֶת

BY RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN
RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS



MADE TO ORDER

After the census of *Parshas Bamidbar* was completed, Hashem told Moshe and Aharon how the *Shevatim* were to encamp and travel while heading to *Eretz Yisrael*. The tribes were broken up into groups of three, with a leading *shevet*, and supporting *shevatim* to each side. They were told exactly how to position themselves in relation to each other, and in relation to the *Mishkan*.¹ Additionally, each tribe had their own flag they would fly, as did each House within each *shevet*.²

The sight of *Klal Yisrael* on the march in such a fashion must have been awe-inspiring. In fact, when Bilaam saw the arrangement of *Klal Yisrael*, he declared that he would have no ability to speak badly about them.³

Although this all made for an impressive sight, would there have been anything wrong had *Klal Yisrael* marched in a jumble? What real significance was there to these columns and rows demanded by Hashem?

R' Aharon Kotler⁴ (1892–1962) sees a fundamental value in *Klal Yisrael's* orderly travel. If *Klal Yisrael* was simply traveling from one point to another, a jumbled mass would have been sufficient. But *Klal Yisrael* does not merely travel — the Jewish nation has a mission, one of closeness to Hashem. Their journey to *Eretz Yisrael*, with the goal of planting the seeds of *avodas Hashem* for all future generations, was not to be marred by a hodgepodge of disorderly masses clamoring to enter the Promised Land.

Avodas Hashem requires a plan, a procedure, and orderly execution, and this even applies to the way one carries oneself. The precise positioning of each *shevet* was not simply a parade ground exercise, it was to stress the importance of orderliness and organization in our service of Hashem.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Some people have it, and some people don't. For those who are not naturally inclined towards orderliness, it is difficult to even know where to begin.

Like many character traits, it is important to start small. Our days are filled with events, opportunities, goals, and setbacks. If we tried to make order out of our entire day, it would be frustrating at best, and pointless at worst.

However, it may very well be worthwhile to choose a small time period during the day, one that would be manageable. Then, before that time arrives, write down the plan of action.

What needs to be done first? When that is done, what is next? And so on.

Besides the advantage of thinking through one's actions, it is extremely likely that one will accomplish much more in a shorter period of time by going through this exercise.

Success breeds success — once a person realizes the advantages of planning and preparation, it will have a carryover effect to other areas in one's life.

1 *Bamidbar* 2:1-34

2 *Ha'amek Davar* on 2:2, s.v. באתת לבית

3 *Bamidbar Rabbah* 2:4

4 *Mishnas R' Aharon Al HaTorah, Bamidbar* 2:3, s.v. איש על

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**Those who have never tasted
the sweetness of Mussar have never
experienced sweetness at all.**

- R' Simcha Zissel Ziv, *Chochmah
U'Mussar, Introduction*

SMILE AND FILE

Zev Hardoon* sat enthralled, as he always did when Rabbi Asher Mensch spoke. It wasn't the delivery, which was fine, and it wasn't always the words of Torah either. It was the breadth of knowledge and the perfect stories — a true story for every occasion, and a quote from a *sefer* for every point.

Zev actually knew Rabbi Mensch from many years prior. Rabbi Mensch was a decade his senior, but they grew up near each other, and would sometimes cross paths. Rabbi Mensch never seemed like a wild genius, but he somehow always had the right thing to say to make his point.

After *davening* one Shabbos morning, Zev decided to take matters into his own hands. He approached Rabbi Mensch with a smile and an outstretched hand.

"Good Shabbos, I was wondering if I could ask you a question?"

"Certainly! What can I help you with?"

"Bluntly, how do you always have the perfect story and source? Do you spend hours on research?"

Rabbi Mensch smiled. "That's very kind of you, Zev. But what do you mean?"

"Well, when you speak, you always have a personal story, something that happened to you, that illustrates the point you are making perfectly. How do you have so many stories? And the sources you quote, it's not simply *Rashi* on *Chumash*. You quote esoteric works on *kaballah* next to a simple *gemarrah*. I've heard you quote *Chassidic* sources, obscure *Rishonim*, and even *Sefer Daniel*, all in the same *shiur*! How do you do it?"

Rabbi Mensch's smile grew until it culminated into laughter. "Come by my house some time, I'll show you my secret!"

The next day, Zev dutifully made his way to Rabbi Asher Mensch's abode. After answering the door, Rabbi Mensch led Zev to his office. "Here it is, the secret to my success." Zev looked around the office. The standard desk and chair combo sat in the center of the room, with an unassuming computer perched atop. But the walls! The walls were all obscured by file cabinets, deep cabinets, six or seven feet tall.

Zev took it all in, when his thoughts were interrupted by Rabbi Mensch. "Zev, I happen to have a fine memory, but it's no match for my note-taking skills. In these cabinets are occurrences that happen to me, anything that I think might make a good story some day. As well, when I'm learning, I often take notes and file it away. I've become quite good at putting things together in a way that makes sense. And that work pays off, which you've noticed."

Zev still had his mouth open. He closed it and smiled. "I thought there was some sort of special rabbi secret. Looks like it's just a good filing system!"

"Zev, that *is* a special rabbi secret."

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- The importance of order is so great, a Levi of the choir who did the work of a Levi of the gatekeepers was deserving of death.¹
- Orderliness is like the knot on a pearl of strings. It alone is not worth much, but it holds all good character traits together.²

¹ *Mishnah Torah, Hilchos Kli HaMikdash, 3:11*

² *Da'as Torah, Bamidbar, pg. 17*

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