

PARSHAS BAMIDBAR - MR DAVID FREEDMAN

וַיְתִלְדוּ עַל מִשְׁפְּחֹתָם לְבֵית אֲבוֹתָם (במדבר א: יח)

".....and they declared their pedigrees according to their families according to their fathers' houses"

Rashi explains they brought the records of their pedigree and witnesses of their birth so that each one should trace the genealogy of their tribe.

Yalkut Shimoni quotes that when the nations of the world complained to Hashem - why were B'nei Yisroel chosen to receive the Torah? Hashem responded by stating "Bring Me your Sefer Yichus, as My children, the Jewish people did, because they were given the Torah in the merit of their Yichus".

The Dubna Magid asks a question; - what does Yichus have to do with Matan Torah? He answers by responding with B'nei Yisroel's reply in Parashas Mishpotim [Shemos 24:3 & 7] - Naaseh V'nishma.

"כל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע" – "Everything that Hashem has spoken, we will do"

With a play on words and changing the tense to past, rather than future ה נַעֲשֶׂה, we have done

Everything that Hashem has spoken we have done.

Previous generations had already carried out Hashem's commandment and Mitzvos. The willingness of the Ovos to carry out Hashem's commands without question or understanding, such as Avraham and Yitzchok at the Akeidah, showed unquestionable obedience.

B'nei Yisroel knew Hashem would not ask of them what they could not do, but how could they promise to honour their commitment without even knowing what they were undertaking. Through the generations, they have witnessed their forefathers who had handed down what had been done, so that B'nei Yisroel were sincere in their promise "Everything that Hashem has spoken, we will do."

Although they had not yet received the Torah, they knew what was expected of them, as they had witnessed what had been done by the earlier generations.

The Ba'al Haturim points out that the verse quoted from Mishpotim [24:7] (כל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע) and the earlier one [24:3] both have 6 words to represent the 12 tribes.

Just as Yaacov proclaimed in Parashas Vayechi [Bereshis 49.1] 6 words "Shema Yisroel "; his sons responded with 6 words "Boruch Shem" The Yichus transferred from generation to generation.

The other nations had no such Yichus as B'nei Yisroel. They trace their descendants via their mother, as their father is not always known. The Jewish people have a history to prove their past. However, you cannot just rely on your forbearers.

It's like a row of zeros 000,000,000,000. Looks big, but without a 1 at the beginning, it's worth nothing.

So to ourselves; as we renew Matan Torah. We must renew our commitment and follow in the teachings of our parents and their parents beforehand.

נַעֲשֶׂה we should do
וְנִשְׁמָע and we should learn

Based on an essay by Rabbi Avraham Yaakov Hakohen Pam (1913 – 2001) Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vodaas, Brooklyn

Dedicated to the memory of my father, Avraham Yitzchok ben Eliezer Hacohen, on his Yahrzeit