



PARSHAS VEZOS HABERACHA – DAVID RABINOWITZ (CHOSON TORAH)

“Torah Tziva Lanu Moshe, Morasha Kehillas Yaakov”

The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Yaakov (Devarim 34:4)

On a recent family holiday in Dorset we visited a restored steam railway. There are many of these railways throughout the country. Often they are referred to as ‘heritage’ railways. A common feature is the presence of enthusiast engineers and other volunteers working with dedication and love to preserve and continue the tradition and enjoyment of steam travel for the next generations.

Remembering our encounter with the steam railway and its community of very active ‘preservers’, helped me understand the following Baal Haturim a little better:

The Baal HaTurim points out that the word Morasha is used only twice in Chumash. Once in pasuk 8 in Parashas Va’eira in reference to Eretz Yisrael and again here in the pasuk in Vezos Habracha in connection to Torah itself.

We could have expected the word Yerusha (‘inheritance’) to be used instead of Morasha.

However, the Baal HaTurim explains that Yerusha is an effortless, automatic inheritance where the inheritor can be passive and simply acquire the ‘Yerusha’ without any active participation.

The word Morasha (‘heritage’), however, is that the ‘heritage’ is indeed passed down to you as a gift, but in order to keep it you must work actively to preserve, nurture and hand it down in pristine condition to our children.

We were given both the Torah and Eretz Yisrael, but we need to invest constant effort in both Torah and Eretz Yisrael, in order to acquire and retain them. In order to merit the land of Israel and to retain hold over it “Kehillas Yaakov” is required to be steadfast to the Torah and the mitzvot.

In a similar way Torah itself is only acquired through active learning and diligent study as we learn in Avos “Prepare yourselves to learn Torah as it is not an inheritance (Yerusha)”.

The train would soon seize up and turn to rust if it were not for constant oiling and painstaking maintenance.

The unbroken chain from Har Sinai until today is only intact and alive through the constant toil and learning lishma (for its own sake) by us and our children and by the generations that have gone before us.

We also learn from this pasuk that there are 613 mitzvos in the Torah from the Gemora (*Gem. Makkos 23b*). The pasuk says that Moshe taught us TORAH (mitzvos), the G'matriya of which is 611 (400+6+200+5). And the other two mitzvos – the first two commandments of the Aseres Hadibros were heard directly from Hashem at Har Sinai.

This pasuk is also known as the first pasuk to teach a young child. The Tosefes Berachah asks why this pasuk is chosen in particular? The Tosefes Berachah answers that this pasuk in particular teaches us that even if we do not *currently* have the ability to understand everything that we are taught from the Torah, we all – young and old, learned and not yet learned have a share in the heritage of the Torah. And through continued efforts a child can learn and grow in Torah.

One more Chazal on this pasuk – מוֹרָשָׁה can also be read “מֵאִוֶּרֶה”, “the bride of the congregation of Yaakov” – at Matan Torah the Jewish people became betrothed to Hashem and are bound up in an eternal bond to His Torah.