

The Center

"That model looks really neat, Chaim. What is it?"

"It is a model of the camp of the Jewish people during the years in the desert, Avi. The twelve tribes are camped around the outside. Inside is the camp of the Kohanim and Leviim."

"What is that in the center?"

"That is the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle)."

"What is inside of the *Mishkan*?"

"Many things. The holiest part is the *Kodesh Kodoshim* (Holy of Holies)."

"What is inside of the *Kodesh Kodoshim*?"

"The *Aron Kodesh* (Holy Ark)."

"Do you mind if I ask you one more question Chaim?"

"Not at all, Avi."

"What is inside of the *Aron Kodesh*?"

"That's a good question, Avi. Inside of the *Aron Kodesh* is the *Sefer Torah*."

"Why is that such a good question Chaim?"

"Because, now you have come to the center. The *Sefer Torah* is in the innermost part of the camp. It is inside the *Aron Kodesh*, which is inside the *Kodesh Kodoshim*, which is inside the *Mishkan*, which is inside the camp of the Kohanim and Leviim, which is inside of the camp of the twelve tribes."

"I see why my question was good. Hashem does not do anything haphazardly. He instructed the Jewish people to set up the camp in this specific way. The center of the camp is the focal point and usually contains something or someone very important."

"Exactly, Avi. The Chofetz Chaim, explains why the *Sefer Torah* was in the center. In our shuls nowadays, the *Sefer Torah* is read on the "*bimah*" a table in the center of the shul. Similarly, the *Eitz HaChaim* (Tree of Life) was planted in the center of the Garden of Eden. This is all a beautiful parable to the Torah, which is our "Tree of Life". The human body is also part of the parable. The life force flows from the heart. Therefore, it is in the center of the body. It pumps the blood, which carries this life force to all parts of the body, and they all receive their energy from it. So you see, when Hashem designs something, He puts its energy source in the center. The Torah must be the energy source for the Jewish people."

"Right again, Avi. The Torah is the generator of the spiritual energy that keeps us alive. In the last blessing of

the Amidah prayer, the Torah is referred to as "*Toras Chaim*", the Torah of life."

"We had better get busy, Chaim."

"Doing what?"

"If Hashem Himself put the Torah in the center of the camp, then we must surely put it in the center of our lives."

Kinderlach . . .

The Torah is called our Torah of life because it guides us how to live our lives. Everything that we do should revolve around it. The halacha (Torah Law) guides us in all areas. It tells us how to eat, how to speak, how to conduct our business matters, and how to treat our family, friends, and neighbors. Whenever we think about doing something, our first question must be, "How should this be done according to Torah?" There is a right and a wrong way to do everything. The Torah tells us the right way. We are now in the last week of preparation for Shavuous – receiving the Torah. When we realize how important the Torah is, we surely want to receive and learn as much of it as we can this Shavuous. Work hard kinderlach. Always learn and follow the Torah. Place it at the center of your lives. Hashem wants to give his dearest gift to those who realize its importance.

Your Number

"Sir how much do these potatoes cost?"

"Three shekels per kilo."

"How many potatoes are in this sack?"

"I don't know young man. I sell the potatoes by weight, not number."

"You don't know how many potatoes you have in these sacks?"

"Not really."

"Can I ask you a personal question, sir?"

"Go right ahead, young man."

"How many children do you have?"

"Eight."

"You know how many children you have, but you don't know how many potatoes you have?"

"Young man, there is a bit of a difference. Every child is a person. A whole world. Each one needs my person attention and supervision to grow up to be a normal, productive person. Potatoes are just potatoes. Although they are different shapes and weights, we eat them all just the same."

"Take a census of the entire

assembly of the Children of Israel" (Bamidbar 1:2). Hashem wanted a precise number. The Keli Yakar zt"l explains that this number distinguishes the Jewish people. Things that are numbered are important. Each Jew is very important. So important, that he is guided by *hashgacha pratis* (Hashem's personal supervision). The number expresses that we are important enough to warrant *hashgacha pratis*. The Ramban zt"l stresses the same point when he explains the word "*tifkidu*" – you shall count (Bamidbar 1:3). This word illustrates that Hashem remembers and supervises. As the verse states, "Hashem *pokad* (remembered) Sara" [to grant her a child] (Bereshis 21:1). A *pikadon* (from the same root word) is an object that someone watches and supervises for you. Hashem is watching and supervising each Jew individually.

Kinderlach . . .

Did you eat a delicious meal today? Chasdey Hashem (an act of kindness from Hashem). Did you do well on your test? Chasdey Hashem. Did Imma give you a big, warm, loving hug? Chasdey Hashem. Did you bang your toe? Chasdey Hashem. Did someone embarrass you? Chasdey Hashem. Why are the last two things chasdey Hashem? They are very unpleasant. Because Hashem is personally supervising our lives. Everything that He does is for the good. There are very good reasons for even the unpleasant things. If you hear news about unpleasant things happening to the Jewish people you must know that it is all chasdey Hashem. He is taking care of us, as He has for the past 3800 years.

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