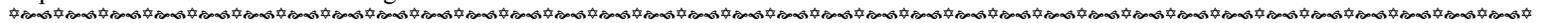


HALACHA V'HALICHA... By Rav Chaim Schabes

The obligation that the Mishkan should be set in the middle of the camp applied not only when Bnai Yisrael were resting, but even while they traveled, as the Torah says **וּנְסַע אוֹהֵל מוֹעֵד מִחֲנֵה הַלֵּוִיִּם בְּתוֹךְ הַמַּחֲנֵה**. The Chafetz Chaim explains, that since the Torah and the *luchos* were placed in the Aron Hakodesh, it is only correct that it be in the center of the *machane*, and not closer to some and further from others, but exactly in the heart of the nation. Just like the *bima*'s place in Shul is right in the middle, as we find also that the *etz hachayim* was **בְּתוֹךְ הַגֵּן**, and the Targum translates, "in the middle of the garden", so too, our tree of life, the Torah, must be the focal point of our concentration, and everything else must find its place around it and in relation to it.

The Shulchan Aruch writes (YD 282:1) that there is an obligation to give *kavod* to the Sefer Torah, to set a special place for it, and to beautify that place. One may not spit in front of a Sefer Torah, or uncover in front of it parts of the body that should normally be covered, and one may not turn his back to it. The Taz says that this doesn't apply to when the Sefer is inside the Aron Hakodesh, because it is considered to be in a different *r'shus*. One should sit in front of it with seriousness and awe because the Sefer Torah is the witness that testifies on behalf of Hashem, in front of the whole world. If people see a Sefer Torah as it is being transported, everyone must stand until it reaches its destination, or until they cannot see it anymore. The Gemarah learns that one must stand in front of a Sefer Torah from a *kal vachomer*: if one must get up for those who learn the Torah, how much more so for the Torah itself. Therefore, even if one is in the middle of learning Torah, he must stand up, as that that is also the *halacha* when one's Rabbi walks into a room (Pischai T'shuva 3). The Rama says that even if one didn't see, but he only heard the Sefer moving, he must also stand. This is the source of the *minhag* to have bells on the crown of the Sefer Torah, and although the Taz objects to their usage on Shabbos, because of the *השמעת קול* (the prohibition to make musical sounds on Shabbos), the Shach writes that it is permitted, because it is needed for the *mitzvah* of *kvod* Hatorah. When carrying the Sefer Torah, one places it against his heart. If one is carrying for oneself (for ex. after *hagbah*), the Sefer's front should be facing him, but when carrying it so that the Tzibur should honor it, then it should be facing away from oneself and towards the Tzibur. One is not allowed to sit on a bench that a Sefer Torah is on, and even more so, one is not permitted to put it on the floor; the same applies to all *s'farim*, and one may not place *s'farim* even on the stairs going up to the Aron Hakodesh. The Rama adds that one may not put a *sefer* on his lap and put his elbows on it. The Taz writes that one is not allowed to put a *sefer* under the one from which he is learning in order to tilt it at a better angle, but if it were there already, it is permitted. Pischai T'shuva brings, that one is not allowed to put a *sefer* inside the one that he was learning from, in order to keep the place, and likewise, one is not allowed to put inside a *sefer*, any object or a paper to be kept and watched. Rav Moshe ZT"L writes (YD 2:76), that one should be careful even with the writing of the Sefer Torah (**כתב אשורית**), that even if it is used just for general writing, it should not be taken into the bathroom, because of the respect one owes to the mere writing itself.



THOUGHTS ON THE HAFTARA ... By Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro (**Hoshe'a 2:1-22**)

Hashem promised Avraham Avinu in the **ברית בין הבתרים** that the Jewish people would be too numerous to count: **הבט נא השמימה וספור**. **הכוכבים אם תוכל לספור אותם ויאמר לו כה יהיה זרעך**. This blessing is repeated to Avraham at the Akeidah (B'reishis 22:17) and is used throughout the generations by the several of our forefathers, including Ya'akov Avinu (B'reishis 32:13), Yirmiyahu (33:22) and in our haftara. The navi begins his prophesy with the now familiar blessing: **והיה מספר בני ישראל כחול הים אשר לא ימד ולא יספר**. It is puzzling, though, with so many references in Tanach to this blessing, how it is that at the same time we find several places in Tanach (including this week's *paresha*) where the people are indeed counted! The Gemara (Yoma 22b) answers that when the Jewish people do not do Hashem's will, they are able to be counted like any other people, but when they do Hashem's will then they merit the blessing. Abarbanel further explains our haftara, focusing on the navi's choosing to compare the Jewish people to the 'sand of the sea': in reality, there is not an infinite amount of sand in the sea, nor is the number of Jews truly infinite. Rather, sand is so abundant in this world that it would be a near impossible task to get a number! Furthermore, the navi specifies sand of the sea, which has the additional quality of being moist, which in turn causes the grains of sand to clump together, further complicating the theoretical task of counting individual grains! Similarly, the **אחדות** of the Jewish people at the time of the *geula* will be so strong that the task of counting them as individuals will truly be 'impossible'; another wondrous experience awaiting us with the coming of the *geula*.



LESSONS FROM OUR GEDOLIM: **לעבר את עבודת המשכן** - Two traveling merchants on their way back home had occasion to stop in the city of Belz. They received a request from the gabbai of the Rebbe to help out with the construction of the new shul. Even though they were not Chassidim, and were in a terrible rush to get home, they felt compelled to listen to the Rebbe. An hour passed, and they were extremely anxious, but they still did not get the "OK" to go on their way. Finally, after another agonizing hour, they received permission to go. They quickly went on their way, but as they neared their town, someone came frantically out to greet them, and informed them that just two hours previously the river had flooded and another traveler had drowned. The two merchants now recognized that it was the *ruach hakodesh* of the Rebbe that had saved them.



