Jewish Tribune – Mishpotim

**Vision and Detail**

A major transition takes place in Parshas Mishpotim. Up until this point, we have been carried along by the sweep and drama of the narrative and we now encounter a very different literature - a code of law.

Why the transition now? Why not just continue to the episode of the eigel hazohov which follows soon after matan Torah?

The answer is that Yiddishkeit is not only a Toras Emes, but a Toras Chaim. There is theory and there is practice.

I once heard a talk by Rabbi Asher Wade. Before he converted, Rabbi Wade used to be a Methodist minister and now lives in Yerushalayim and lectures for Ohr Sameach and Aish HaTorah. The story of his journey is fascinating and one of the points he made stuck with me.

Before he became Jewish, he would often hear the exhortation “be kind” or “be charitable”. Indeed, as an ordained minister, he would encourage his flock to do just that. What was missing, was the detail. How exactly should you be kind and charitable?

When he discovered Yiddishkeit he was struck by the detail which followed the broader vision. How does one be kind? Learn Ahavas Chesed and you’ll see. How exactly should one be charitable? Well, there are thirteen simanim in Shulchan Aruch in Hilchos tzedakah for a start. And learning the various teshuvos and contemporary Poskim can sometimes feel like going through a tax manual.

But more than that, connecting a broad vision with highly specific details gives meaning and leads to greatness. As Rabbi Sacks notes, without vision, details are tiresome but without the detail, nothing would be achieved. As Thomas Edison said, “genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration”.

Greatness is achieved by connecting a broad vision with the details. The story is told of three men employed to cut blocks of stone. You ask each what they are doing. One says, “cutting stone”; the second says “earning a living”; and the third says “building a palace.”

Seeing the bigger picture doesn’t just encourage us to work harder, it actually makes the work more enjoyable.

In last week’s parsha, Klal Yisroel are given its mission statement:**וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ -** And you shall be to Me a nation of priests, a holy nation.

What follows in this week’s parsha are the details. This is how we achieve our national mandate and that is how we achieve greatness.

This is true in every area of life. In a school, we need the combination of vision and detail. Grand plans to accompany the daily routine. This is true in our own aspirations, personally, for our families, our mosdos, our communities and all of Klal Yisroel.

May we merit to dream and have grand visions but also to plan and pursue the details so that we can fulfil these dreams and visions and achieve greatness.

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