

# נהר ופשתיה Nahar U'Pashtei

A Weekly Insight From

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לע"נ משה בן צבי  
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## Resetting our Foundation

In *Parshas Yisro* we received the Torah, which contains direction and guidance for us to utilize in every facet of our lives. We were now charged with utilizing the Torah to elevate ourselves from among those who were not ready to receive it, and to become the nation that Hashem truly desired. As we speak of often, the key to a true *kabbalas haTorah* is to allow the Torah to guide you and establish your morals, and even your deepest feelings. However, when one approaches Torah with preconceived notions and with ideas that are influenced by secular concepts, he automatically molds the Torah to fit with his lifestyle instead of molding himself to become a Torah Jew. The result is that a person can look and feel like a Torah Jew, but he is in fact very far from it. This lesson of accepting the Torah is always relevant and comes up almost daily in our lives, and reading *Parshas Yisro* is an opportunity to revisit this integral lesson.

But what I would like to touch on here is another lesson hidden in the *pesukim* of our *Parshah*. The Torah tells us, *And you shall not ascend My Mizbei'ach on steps, so that your nakedness not be uncovered upon it*. Now at first glance the Torah is commanding the Kohanim that go up the *Mizbei'ach* to offer sacrificial parts of offerings not to ascend a stairway up the *Mizbei'ach* for the lack of modesty it would display. However, this does not seem to be the meaning here, for we know that the Kohanim had four garments; a tunic, breeches, a belt, and a hat! They were not merely wearing robes, and so how would a staircase present a problem of immodesty? And furthermore, these would not be the only steps used by the Kohanim in the Temple Service! We know that there was a large regal staircase leading into the *Heichal* building - where of course the services of the *ketores* and the *Menorah* were performed on a daily basis! Additionally, there were steps to enter the *Azarah*. So, why would the steps leading up to the *Mizbei'ach* present a greater problem than these other steps?

Based on the above, I suggest a novel interpretation of this *mitzvah*. There is no problem with climbing steps in the *Mikdash* at all. This commandment is only said about the *Mizbei'ach* for the following reason. The *Mizbei'ach* is where we offer *korbanos*, which serve to symbolizes our spiritual growth and our connection to Hashem. As we have mentioned many times, offering a *korban* represents one's level of *Emunah* and *Bitachon*, or in some instances, the recognition that he must strive to reach these higher levels. When one offers an *olah*, the idea he expresses is that his belief that Hashem is the ultimate Giver is so strong that he can watch his entire animal be "wasted" and remain completely calm. When one is climbing up toward the *madreigos* of the *Mizbei'ach*, the potential for a new danger arises. He must not take giant steps, and try to gain leaps and bounds of spiritual ascent all at once. Proper ascent upward is gradual and smooth, like a ramp, with each step fortified by the one before it. When one spreads himself too thin because he feels he must take large steps, his inner weaknesses will be "exposed", for he is truly not ready for such heights. Forcing the issue will only serve to topple him. The Torah is telling us that the proper way to approach growth in *avdodas Hashem* is with a steady and balanced foot forward.

Gut Shabbos!

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