

H-E-C-T-I-C

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

Life is just so busy. Traveling to work, back home, family responsibilities, household responsibilities; the days seem to go by in a blur-like fashion. My wife and I find this pace to be the most difficult adjustment of living in the States.

The Ramcha"l explains that Paroah's plan to keep the Jews as slaves was to keep them as busy as possible. This wouldn't allow for the introspection and growth which would render them worthy of redemption. Life in Israel seemed to go at a much slower pace. There was more time to focus on what was being accomplished without having to spend so much time and energy on just getting there.

We read the parsha of Bamidbar as we are making our final preparations for Shavuos. As such, Bamidbar must reveal some sort of a game-plan to make our Kabalas HaTorah a greater reality on Shavuos itself and one that will last throughout the year.

"And Hashem spoke to Moshe in Midbar [the wilderness of] Sinai. [1:1]" According to the Medrash [Rabbah 1:7], the passuk is stressing that the Torah was given in the Midbar. Many different explanations are offered but an idea that struck me is the hushed, serene, solitude of a midbar. Time for thoughts. Time for self-awareness, self-understanding, self- assessment. That is what enabled a Kabalas HaTorah.

And us? Our already busy, hectic lives are incessantly invaded by our cellphones, beepers and all the myriad electronic, multi-tasking devices that provide us with "all noise, all the time." I longingly recall the summers I spent running a sleep-away camp in Israel without a phone in our bungalow. The sweet sounds of silence . . .

When Eliyahu HaNavi witnessed Hashem's presence, we are told that at first a stone-shattering wind passed, but Hashem's presence was not manifested in that wind. That was followed by a clamorous din and then by a blaze but Hashem's presence wasn't found in either of those. Finally, Hashem's awesome presence was evident--in the guise of a soft, gentle voice.

As we prepare for Shavuos, we need to find or create that environment and those moments when that soft, gentle, resonating voice of Hashem can be heard and felt, enabling us to shift our focus from the clutter of our lives to the purpose of our existence.

Good Shabbos,

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