



Mitzvah Mindset

“An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of Hashem; even the tenth generation shall never enter the assembly of Hashem.” (*Devarim 23:4*)

The Torah forbids members of these nations from marrying into the Jewish people, as they did not greet the Jews with water and bread when they left Egypt and moreover, they hired Bilam to curse the Jewish people. What is puzzling here is that the Torah was given in its entirety at Har Sinai, yet these particular events had not even occurred!

The *Beis Halevi* offers a fundamental approach to the way we relate Torah and mitzvot. Truth be told, all mitzvot are Divine in origin and are beyond our mortal comprehension. As Hashem’s chosen nation, we are obligated to fulfill His Will for no other reason than that He commanded it. Thus, we are forbidden to include Ammonites and Moavites irrespective of the reason. However, the Torah **does** record a reason so as to emphasize the negative qualities these nations exhibited. In doing so, we are cautioned to act differently, adhering to the values and morals set out by Torah law and spirit. In effect, Hashem caused the Ammonites and Moavites to behave this way, so we have

a clear definition between us. Living Torah positively impacts our nature and forms our identity.

Rav Lopian zt”l in *Lev Eliyahu* expounds on this idea. Hashem created the world for the sake of Torah, and not the opposite. We are not warned against theft because people tend to steal. Rather, since Hashem wanted to give us the opportunity to learn Torah and keep His mitzvot, He created within us a desire to steal.

When viewing the Torah and indeed, the entire world in this light, we are led to reassess our conventional paradigms. At the beginning of the *parashah*, Rav Gedalya Schorr zt”l notes in *Ohr Gedalyahu*, that wherever we go we encounter opportunities to do mitzvot. Often, we look at mitzvot as something that we happen to do, or something we need to do to get on with our day. Instead, we must try to view mitzvot as the essence of our lives. The *Zohar Hakadosh* defines mitzvot as 613 mediums through which we can connect with Hashem. Although we do ascribe reasons for mitzvot to make them more understandable and relatable, we cannot forget that it is the mitzvah itself that we are after.

When we understand this dynamic, we will search out opportunities to do mitzvot, as they are the purpose and intention of creation. Connecting with the Will of Hashem and accessing the core of creation is the greatest reason to do a mitzvah. ■