

## Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon saying, "The Bnei Yisrael shall encamp, each man by his banner according to the insignias of their fathers' household, at a distance surrounding the Ohel Moed shall they encamp." (2:1,2)

An inconsistency seems to be manifest in the text of this *pasuk*. Hashem enjoins *Klal Yisrael* to camp "*mineged*," at a distance, and "*saviv*", surrounding. Are they to camp *mineged* or *saviv*? If it is opposite it is not close. The *Satmar Rebbe, zl*, cites his father in his *sefer*, "*Yetev Lev*." He explains this apparent contradiction in light of *Rashi's* interpretation of the phrase, "*b'osos l'bais avosam*," "*according to the insignias of their fathers' household*," as a reference to the signs that Yaakov gave his sons, regarding the formation of his sons when they were to serve as his pallbearers. When Yaakov placed Efraim before Menashe -- the younger brother before the older brother -- he was apparently indicating that his perspective was oriented to the future. Efraim would one day succeed Menashe in spiritual status and prestige. Yaakov subsequently selected Efraim to precede Menashe.

With this idea in mind, we can understand the *Torah's* intention in using two terms that seem to contradict each other. In the *Talmud Megillah 29*, *Chazal* state that one day the Houses of Study and Worship situated in Babylon will be reinstated in *Eretz Yisrael*. Indeed, in the *Midrash* it is stated that the future *Bais Hamikdash* will be the size of *Yerushalayim*. The *Maharshah* attributes this to the fact that one day all of the *shuls* will combine with the *Bais Hamikdash*. In other words, the *shuls* and *yeshivos* in *galus*, exile, are considered part of the future *Bais Hamikdash*. What an incredible statement! The *Batei Medrash* and *Batei Knesses* of today are the *Bais Hamikdash* of the future! This should give us something to think about the next time we enter a *makom Torah*.

Thus, while the *m'komos ha'Torah* of the Diaspora may presently be "distant" in a spiritual and physical manner from the *Bais Hamikdash*, if we ascribe to Yaakov *Avinu's* perspective of looking to the future to become the present, then what is far is really near. This is why the *Torah* says each person rested nearby the *Mishkan* while it says they were *m'neged*, distant. They rested "*b'osos l'bais avosom*," according to the charge and legacy of their ancestor Yaakov, who integrated the future with the present.

We may suggest an alternative reason for the discrepancy of the words describing *Klal Yisrael's* geographic placement vis-a-vis the *Ohel Moed*. *Rashi* interprets the word "*mineged*" as implying "distant from." We find in the *Mishnayos Peah*, *Chazal* enumerate a number of wonderful *mitzvos* which focus on social, humanistic and religious areas of communal life. The *Mishnah* concludes with the words, "*V'talmud Torah k'neged kulam*," "and/but the study of *Torah* is greater than/supercedes all of them." We are confronted with a textual question: If the purpose of this *Mishnah* is to convey to us that *Torah* study is greater than all these wonderful *mitzvos*, then rather than use the word "*k'neged*," which is usually translated as "opposite," they should have said,

"*oleh al kulam*," goes above them. Why use a word which has a contradictory connotation? My *rebbe*, *Horav Chaim Mordechai Katz, zl*, explained that the *Mishnah* uses the word *k'neged*, opposite, by design. *Chazal* are teaching us that every *mitzvah* or good deed, regardless of its noble intentions and social benefits, must stand up to the *Torah's* purview, to its criteria for establishing the veracity of this endeavor. It must be stood up opposite the *Torah*, to see what the *Torah* "says" about the manner in which we perform this *mitzvah*, our true goals and objectives. Only after it has passed the *Torah's* approval does it become a *mitzvah*. A similar thought may be expressed in regard to those people situating themselves in close proximity to the *Ohel Moed*. People may say, and even think, they are doing the right thing. They may believe that they perform *mitzvos* with the greatest integrity. Their actions and intentions must be stood up opposite, *k'neged*, the *Torah*, however, to determine if they are really *misaviv*, close by or mineged, far removed from the *Torah*. In other words, it is possible to be close by and actually be distant simultaneously.