

Ki Tavoh

It is an established and undisputed fact that the Torah contains six hundred thirteen Mitzvot. As mentioned in the Talmud, Rabbi Simlai taught: "Six hundred thirteen Mitzvot were given to Moshe Rabenu at Sinai; three hundred sixty-five equal to the three hundred sixty-five days of the solar year and two hundred forty-eight equal to the limbs and organs of man".¹

Rabbi Hamenunah said: "From which source do we adduce this figure and he quotes the sentence "Torah was commanded to us by Moshe".² The numerical value of the word *Torah* is six hundred eleven. When you consider that the first two of the Ten Commandments were heard by all of Israel, directly from G-d, and then you add these two to the six hundred eleven given to us through Moshe Rabenu, we have six hundred thirteen.

This important teaching comes to mind when we read this Sidrah of *Ki Tavoh*. For in it we find the Mitzvah of "Vehalachta Bidrachav."³ And you shall walk in the ways of the L-rd. And our Rabbis in the Talmud interpret the Mitzvah in the following manner: "Just as G-d is merciful, so should you be merciful. Just as G-d is gracious, so too should you be gracious. Just as G-d is righteous, so too should you be righteous. Just as G-d is holy, so too should you be holy."⁴

The idea behind this Rabbinic explanation is to train our soul in the conduct of our lives, regarding our relationship with others, in the same manner as G-d shows to His creations.⁵

In a different Talmudic tractate,⁶ our sages based the concept of imitating G-d and applying in our daily lives the qualities of A-mighty, to another sentence in the Torah:⁷ "And you shall walk after G-d (meaning to cleave to His ways): Just as G-d dresses the naked, visits the sick, buries the dead, comforts the bereaved, so should you."

There is a difference of opinion between our great codifiers, the Rambam⁷ and Ramban⁸ as to whether or not these Mitzvot are from the Torah or decreed by the Rabbis. Regardless of the Halachic implications, the remarkable fact is, that these seemingly common rules which were designed to control our social behavior, are considered of such prime importance, as to be directly associated with conduct ascribed to the A-mighty.

These Rabbinic teachings utterly demolish the specious argument of the conservative and reform clergymen, who claim that the traditional orthodox Jew is only concerned with the laws between man and G-d and is not interested in the human relations aspects of the Torah. On the contrary! Emphasis here seems to center on the total commitment of each Jew to the social needs of his fellow man. In fact, these social laws are placed on the highest possible level, attributing to the A-mighty himself, these purely human attributes.

It also seems remarkable that this important Mitzvah is counted by the Sefer Hachinuch⁹ as number six hundred and eleven of the six hundred thirteen. It may indicate that only after observing six hundred ten Mitzvot, you are now ready to practice and observe these noble traits, enunciated in the Mitzvah, six hundred eleven.

Judaism demands the strictest care in our relationship with our fellowmen. It is only when we are truly concerned with the physical and social welfare of our neighbors, that we can expect to be considered truly righteous Jews, observing the Torah completely.

We need to place great emphasis on our "Ben Adam La Chavero" conduct, for our "Ben Adam La Makom" will be accepted by Heaven. This, then, may be the reason that this important mitzyah is placed toward the end of the list, teaching us to constantly improve our standards to reach true fulfillment.