



What's Our Banner?

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה בְּן חֲנָן
לְדָגְלֵיהֶם וְכֹן נִסְעוּ אִישׁ לְמִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ עַל בַּיִת אָבֹתָיו.

And the Children of Israel did all that the Lord had commanded Moses; they encamped by their banners, **and so they journeyed each man with his family, according to his father's house.** (Num. 2:34)

In *Bemidbar* each tribe is given its own banner and position in the camp, and each one is counted within the crowd. The *Netivot Shalom* expands on this historic event:

Just as each nation and each military corps has a unique banner which denotes its special task, so too each and every individual has his own banner and special task. The worst possible thing is when a person exists in the world without purpose or mission and has no idea what he is living for, for what purpose he was born into the world. The purpose of the banners in the wilderness was to clarify the mission of each person. One tribe bears the banner of Torah, another of labor, another of good deeds, and they come together to form a whole unit. This is a hint to future

generations. Each person has his own task and way of life, and there is no one who does not have a banner he belongs to. A person must look after his own banner and not exchange it for issues that are not his task. When a person finds out what his mission in the world is, he has found out the secret of his life.

How are we supposed to discover this secret? How can we find out what our mission and banner are? The *Netivot Shalom* suggests that Shabbat, the day in which we focus more on our inner selves, can help us:

One of the *zemirot* we sing around the Shabbat table is “Whoever protects the Shabbat properly from desecration, each in his own camp, each under his own banner.” A person is distracted and confused during the six days of the week and does not have the clarity to know what his camp and banner is. Only on the holy Shabbat does he have the peace of mind to be a person of his own camp, under his own banner. ■

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