

Zera Shimshon

Profound Divrei Torah culled from the writings of the Gaon and Mekubal Rav Shimshon Chaim ben Rav Nachman Michael Nachmani zy" a, author of Sefer Zera Shimshon on Chumash and Toldos Shimshon on Pirkei Avos, who promised that all who study his words will be blessed with an abundance of good, wealth and honor, and will merit to see children and grandchildren thriving around their table.



אמרות שמשון

From our parasha it emerges that the mountain's name is "Sinai" and not "Chorev"

"And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting..." (Bamidbar 1:1)

Our Sages said in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 1:1) regarding the phrase "And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai": "This is what the verse refers to (Tehillim 36:7): 'Your judgments are like a great abyss.'" It is necessary to understand what connection there is between these two verses.

This may be explained by first introducing what we find regarding the fact that Mount Sinai has several names. In the Talmud (Shabbat 89a) there is a dispute concerning what the essential name of the place is: Rabbi Yose bar Chanina maintains that its name is "Chorev," and that it is also called "Sinai" (סיני) because from there descended the sin-ah (שנאה: hatred) toward the nations of the world. On the other hand, Rabbi Avhu maintains that its essential name is "Sinai," and that it is also called "Chorev" (חורב) because from there descended the churbah (חורבה: destruction) upon the nations.

The Rif, in the work Ein Yaakov, explains that "descended the sin-ah (hatred)" means that the nations were hated for not having accepted the Torah, whereas "descended the churbah (destruction)" means that they were additionally punished and devastated. According to Rabbi Yose bar Janina, who states that the principal name is "Chorev," the nations were hated but not punished; whereas Rabbi Avhu, who maintains that the principal name is "Sinai," understands that they were punished with destruction for not having wished to accept the Torah, and all the more so were they also hated.

According to this, it may be explained that the intention of the Midrash is to demonstrate, from the verse "And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai," that the mountain's true name is "Sinai." For from other places where the Torah mentions "Sinai," nothing can be proven, since in those places the Torah uses the mountain's name in relation to the giving of the Torah or the mitzvot that were commanded, according to each interpretation or approach.

Here, however, the verse is not dealing with any commandment nor with the giving of the Torah, but rather with the census of the People of Israel; therefore, it certainly uses the mountain's essential and original name. From here it emerges that its name is "Sinai." Consequently, one must say that it is also called "Chorev" because from there destruction descended upon the nations of the world.

For this reason, the Midrash cites the verse "Your judgments are like a great abyss," which alludes to the punishment that descended upon the nations at Mount Sinai.

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Bamidbar, art. 2)

Haftara of the week

The Torah was given to Israel because they are bold

"And the number of the Children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor counted..." (Hoshea 2:1)

In the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 2:16), regarding this verse, Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman said:

"If all the nations were to gather together in order to sever the love between Hashem and Israel, they would not be able to do so, as it is written (Shir Hashirim 8:7): 'Many waters cannot extinguish the love.' 'Many waters' refers to the nations of the world."

One may ask: how could it even be imagined that the nations would be able to nullify the love between Hashem and Israel, to the point that a verse is needed to deny it?

It may be answered that we find in the Talmud (Beitza 25b) that Israel is the boldest among the peoples. On the other hand, it is known that the Divine Presence rests only upon the humble, as it is written (Yeshai'a 57:15): "I dwell on high and holy, and with the crushed and humble of spirit." Therefore, the nations could argue: "Why does Hashem love Israel, if they are bold and not humble?"

Nevertheless, they cannot nullify that love, because precisely through that firmness and boldness they merited receiving the Torah, as our Sages themselves say there. The Maharsha explains that because they are bold, they study Torah properly, for "the timid person does not learn." And when there is wisdom, reverential fear emerges; and that fear leads to humility, as it is written (Mishlei 22:4): "As a consequence of humility comes the fear of Hashem." Thus, through the Torah, they ultimately arrive at humility.

(Zera Shimshon, Parashat Bamidbar, art. 4)

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Chapter 6 Mishna 3

“Anyone who does not engage in Torah study is called nazuf (repudiated) [...] for there is no true free person except one who engages in Torah study; and whoever engages in Torah study becomes elevated, as it says (Bamidbar 21:19): ‘And from Matanah to Nachaliel, and from Nachaliel to Bamot.’”

Servitude to Hashem is considered greatness and honor

We must delve deeper into why someone who does not study Torah is called *nazuf* (repudiated), based on what is taught in the *Gemara* (*Bava Metzia* 85b): one who does not engage in Torah study is considered a slave to his Evil Inclination. Since he is called a slave, and the Torah is regarded as a “free woman,” she cannot marry a slave; therefore, the Torah distances itself from him and “drives him away”, which is why he is called *nazuf*.

However, this raises a question: why is one who engages in Torah study called a free person? After all, just as the one who doesn’t study is called a slave to his *yetzer* (his evil inclination), isn’t the one who does study also called a slave — a slave to his *Yotzer* (his Creator)?

The answer may be what the Tanna means when he says, “and whoever engages in Torah study becomes elevated.” True, the Torah scholar is also considered a slave — but this

servitude is an honor, similar to how people refer to the “king’s servant” as a king himself. Not only is the Torah given to him, but he even comes to rule over it like a king, for it is handed to him as a gift, and he can use it as he wishes — as alluded to in the verse describing one of Israel’s journeys in the desert: “And from Matanah (which means ‘gift’) to Nachaliel (which can be understood as ‘an inheritance from Hashem’), and from Nachaliel to Bamot (‘a high place’, a term implying ‘elevation’).”

Another explanation: one who acquires material possessions becomes like a slave to them, since he must safeguard them. Likewise, a king — the burden of watching over his people is a form of servitude, not of authority. But one who acquires Torah is a true king, because it is the Torah that protects him. This is the meaning of the *Mishnah*’s statement: “There is no true free person except one who engages in Torah study.”

Chapter 6 Mishna 5

“This is the way of the Torah: you shall eat bread with salt, drink water in measured amounts, you shall sleep on the ground, live a life of hardship, and in Torah you toil.”

A life of measured simplicity is the path to the greatest acquisition of Torah

The word the *Mishnah* uses for “bread” is *pat* (פַּת) rather than the usual *lechem* (לֶחֶם). The term *pat* refers to a small piece, as in the verse (*Vayikra* 2:6): “You shall break it into pieces” (“*Patot otah pitim*”). This teaches us that even if a person does not have a whole loaf of bread, but only small pieces — meaning, his sustenance is minimal — he should still not be distressed, for that is the way of the Torah: “you shall eat bread with salt.” Similarly, “drink water in measured amounts,” meaning he afflicts himself by drinking from a small vessel that does not quench his thirst all at once, and

he thus drinks with some difficulty.

Now, the hardship of bread is understandable, as it comes from poverty. But why must one also afflict himself in the way he drinks water, when even the poor have access to water? And why must he “sleep on the ground,” when even the poorest person has a bit of straw to lie on? Therefore, the Tanna adds, “live a life of hardship,” teaching that this is truly the path of Torah — not only lack and poverty, but hardship as well. Thus, even when one can obtain more water, it is preferable to drink only a little, to experience some discomfort.

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