



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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Parashat Bamidbar

A New Matan Torah Every Year

Our *parasha* states (1:1), "And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Sinai Desert, in the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year from when they left Egypt, saying."

Questions:

- 1) Our Sages ask why the Torah states that Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Sinai Desert. Why could it not have simply said that Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Tent of Meeting?
- 2) Furthermore, commentators ask why *Matan Torah* took place in the desert. Why was the Torah not given in *Eretz Yisrael*? Rabbi Zeira teaches in *Baba Batra* 158b that the air in *Eretz Yisrael* makes people wise. Its holiness enables Jews to grasp Torah fully, and many mitzvot can only be performed in *Eretz Israel*. Why did Hashem give us His Torah prior to our entering the Holy Land?

A Common Mistake

Many mistakenly believe that our standing by Har Sinai and receiving the Torah was a mere historical event and nothing more. They believe that Shavuot is but a remembrance to this awesome day. However, our Torah teaches us that this is not so; rather, each and every year we stand by Har Sinai and receive the Torah once again. This actually repeats itself and is not a mere commemoration. This has ramifications in present times as well and even has relevance in *halacha*, as we will soon explain.

The Torah was Given with Fire, Water, and Desert

Our Sages expound (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 1:7) on the *pasuk*, "And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Sinai Desert...." They ask why does the *pasuk* specifically mention the Sinai Desert? Our Sages answer that the Torah was given with three things: fire, water, and desert. The Midrash cites a *pasuk* to substantiate each one. The Sages then ask why the Torah was given with these 3 things, to which they answer, that just as these things are free for whoever wants, so too, are words of Torah free. Alternatively, they answer that anyone who does not make himself ownerless like a desert, cannot acquire the wisdom of the Torah. This is why it specifically states, "in the Sinai **Desert**."

Connecting With Hashem

Rav Shimshon Pincus in his *sefer Tiferet Shimshon* explains why the Torah was given in the desert: He writes that at the end of *Maseschet Taanit*, our Sages compare the giving of the Torah to a wedding between Hashem and the Jewish Nation. The connection between Hashem and the Jewish people is through the Torah. For this connection to be complete, there must be no disturbances, and nothing



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distracting the Jews from studying the Torah. If they would have entered Eretz Yisrael before *Matan Torah*, it is possible that they would have gotten involved in working and enjoying the fruits of the Land; what would have been with the Torah? For 40 years, the Jews were in the desert and were not distracted by working in the fields of with grape vines. It was like a *cheder yichud*, a room of seclusion, where, following the *chuppah*, the *chatan* and *kallah* strengthen the bond between them. Weddings do not take place inside a house, for if they did, the *kallah* would have to man the kitchen, and this is not the appropriate time for that. In the desert, the Jews only involvement was with the Torah. That established the eternal connection between the Jewish Nation and Hashem through the Torah. This was the wedding, *chuppah*, and *yichud* between the Jewish Nation and their Father in Heaven.

Erev Shavuot is Called Yom Tavuach

The *chag* of *Matan Torah* was not a one-time event; rather, it is renewed each and every year. In the Gemara (*Shabbat* 129b), Shmuel teaches that one who lets blood on *erev Shavuot* is putting himself in danger. As a result, the Sages decreed that one may not let blood on any *erev Yom Tov*. Shmuel explains that the reason it is dangerous to let blood on *erev Shavuot* is because on this day a wind called *Tavuach* blows. The root of the name *Tavuach* is from *tavach*, which means to slaughter. This wind was created because if the Jews would not have accepted the Torah, it would have slaughtered them.

According to Halacha, Erev Shavuot is a Dangerous Time

Accordingly it is ruled in *Shulchan Aruch* (468:10) that it is forbidden to let blood on any *Erev Yom Tov*, and that one should not deviate from this. The Magen Avraham cites the aforementioned Gemara in *Shabbat* as a source for this ruling. The Mishnah Berurah (ibid. s"v 38) rules accordingly as well, stating that *Tavuach* is a spiritual demon that was a threat to the Jews lest they accept the Torah. He adds that this is only if one wishes to let blood to benefit his health, but if he is ill to the point that he is in danger, one can rely on the *Elyah Rabbah*, who permits it.

Matan Torah is Renewed Each Year

In that case, we must ask why, after the Jews already accepted the Torah, this spiritual danger is still a threat. Why should it be a concern on *erev Shavuot* nowadays? From here I believe that we can learn a valuable lesson: Our Sages teach us that the entire world's existence is dependent on the Jews' acceptance of the Torah. This is as it states in *Masechet Pesachim* (68b), which quotes the *pasuk* (*Yirmiah* 33), "If not for My covenant [-Torah study] day and night, I would not have established the laws of Heaven and earth." Since all the nations of the world, refused accepting the Torah, if the Jews would not have accepted it, the world would have returned to a state of nothingness. Even the aforementioned demon would not have existed. It would have been slaughtered instead of him threatening others with such a fate. He therefore goes out on *erev Shavuot* to scare the Jews into accepting the Torah; this way, he ensures his existence. Perhaps this can be alluded to in the words of



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the Maharal (*Chiddushei Aggadot, Shabbat*), who wrote that the Torah is not from this world; rather it is from Heaven. But our world needs the Torah. Therefore on *erev Shavuot*, prior to accepting the Torah, the world is missing what it needs. Since the world is lacking, there is a demon, whose name alludes to slaughter and demise. For it signifies that without the Torah, the world will waste away and has no future. This is why *erev Shavuot* is called *Yom Tavuach*. This teaches us just how necessary it was for us to receive the Torah. One who objects to the Torah, is preventing the world from receiving what is vital for its existence and is forcibly eliminated. According to what we have explained, we can understand that this demon is still a threat. Therefore, ensuing generations are warned that danger lurks on *erev Shavuot*.

The Same Spiritual Bounty Today

Furthermore, it appears that our Sages are teaching us that *Matan Torah* was not mere history. Rather, there is a new *Matan Torah* every single year. This is as Rav Chaim Vital said in the name of the Arizal, that whatever spiritual bounty existed at the time of the first *chag* in history is renewed each year. The Ramchal writes similarly in *Derech Hashem* (5:4:7) This is why there is a renewed danger each year, which threatens each individual lest he refuses accepting the Torah. We find that the *Nefesh Hachaim* writes that Hashem created the world round and spread the Jews all over the globe so that there would be Torah studied at each and every moment. For if there would be even one moment that the world would be bereft of Torah study, it would return to emptiness *chas veshalom*. Therefore, the threat that existed at the time of *maamad Har Sinai*, namely, that if the Jews would not accept the Torah the world would end, exists today as well. Therefore, even according to the *halacha*, one must take precautionary measures each year on *erev Shavuot*.

Behavior of Torah Greats as Shavuot Drew Near

It is related about R' Yisrael Salanter *zt"l* that he looked somewhat tense before Shavuot. When he was asked why, he replied that the day of judgment for the Torah world is soon to arrive. It is similarly related about Rav Shach *zt"l*, that he was also noticed to be very tense before Shavuot. He explained that he heard from R' Isser Zalman Meltzer *zt"l*, who heard in the name of the Netziv *zt"l*, that Shavuot is the day of judgment for the amount of Torah wisdom one will gain that year.

Words of Mussar

We have learned that the Torah teaches us that *Matan Torah* takes place every year. This is to the extent that it even has ramifications in the precautions that *halacha* requires us to take. This should motivate each and every one of us to prepare ourselves for this great day. To merit receiving the Torah, Hashem gave it to us specifically in a desert. This is so that there should be nothing standing in the way of our relationship with Him. For someone who engages in other pursuits, will not connect with Him and is not married to the Torah. Even though we are living in Eretz Yisrael and are busy with so many things, we must nevertheless put our energy into toiling in Torah. For it is the means by which



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man can connect with his Creator and will merit receiving the Torah. It should be His Will that we all merit feeling love for the Torah and for its sweetness. Through this, we will merit *kabbalat haTorah* from new, *amen ve'amen*.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach,
Rav Mordechai Malka