



Bamidbar-Shavuos: Borderless Space

Parshas Bamidbar & Shavuos

It is interesting to note that Shavuos always comes out after we read Parshas Bamidbar. This arrangement is ancient and is brought down in the Rambam's Hilchos Tefillah. It corresponds with the historical event itself. We always read Parshas Bamidbar within the first week of the month of Sivan and historically on Rosh Chodesh Sivan the Jews arrived at "Midbar Sinai"- the Sinai desert. There is no coincidence here and there is great meaning in reading Parshas Bamidbar before Shavuos as it corresponds to the time that the Jews arrived in the Sinai desert, in preparation to receive the Torah.

Torah & No-Man's Land?

Why did Hashem choose to give us the Torah in the desert? Would it not have been more fitting to give us the Torah in the Holy land of Eretz Yisrael where the full 613 Mitzvos apply? The Midrash in this week's Parsha actually addresses this issue by pointing out that Hashem gave the Torah with 3 elements: fire (as is evident from the account of Matan Torah in Parshas Yisro), water (as per the account of Matan Torah as relayed in the song of Devorah that "the clouds also dripped water") and with (in) desert. The Midrash explains why the

desert and says: "... just like the desert is "Hefker"-no man's land, so also a person has to make himself "Hefker" to acquire the wisdom of the Torah". What does it mean to make oneself like "Hefker", as if he is 'no man's land'?

Order in Nowhere

Ironically, we see in this week's Parsha that the Jewish people in the desert did not treat it as "Hefker"-No-man's land, where anything goes with no borders or boundaries. Rather, they traveled and camped in a very distinct formation with flags, as if they were in their own country, living by a strict order that's far from being able to go anywhere anytime. This gives us a two-fold question. Why was this strict formation of encampment and transit with flags necessary as they were not intending to dwell in the desert on a permanent basis? How would this be consistent with the whole reason why the Torah was given in the desert where it's 'no-man's land' and anybody can go anywhere within it at any time?

Perpetual Newness

The Pasuk says in Parshas Yisro, "on the third month of the children of Israel leaving the land of Egypt on this day (present tense) they came

MAY ALL THE HARBOTZOS HaTORAH AND KEDUSHA GENERATED BY THIS
WEEK'S PARSHA SHEET BE A TREMENDOUS Z'CHUS FOR

לעילוי נשמת חוה יהודית בת הרב חיים ז"ל

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to the Sinai desert". Rashi brings the Chazal that note that it should have said, on **that day** (past tense) they came to the Sinai desert. Rashi brings Chazal's answer, that it is to teach you that the words of Torah should always be new to you as if they were given today. Why would the allusion to viewing Torah as new every day be taught to us a week before Torah was actually given and in the context of arriving in the Sinai desert? More fundamentally, how in the world should a person view what he already learned as perpetually new? Are we talking about self-deception?

The Desert & Destiny

The Midrash in this week's Parsha says two incredible things about the desert. It says that when Hashem was seeking a place to give the Torah any other type of place trembled and ran away, as the Pasuk says in Tehillim, "the sea saw and ran, the mountains shuddered like rams and sheep", **only the desert stood still and was welcoming to the Divine presence and therefore Hashem chose to give the Torah in the desert.** Why did the other types of places run and what is special about the desert that it was welcoming to the Divine presence? Another amazing thing is that the Midrash in Parshas Masei says that **in the future, all habitable space that we know will be laid desolate and become desert, whereas all desert space is destined to blossom and become habitable space. Why is that?** What did habitable space do wrong that it deserved to be laid desolate? What did the desert do right, to deserve to blossom and become habitable space?

Hate & Desolation

The Midrash in this week's Parsha says that amongst the many names mount Sinai had are "**Har Sinai**", which is to be understood as a derivative of "**Sinah**"- hatred that on this mountain Hatred came down to the Goyim. If hatred came down to them, it is understood

that they reciprocate with hatred, which means **Matan Torah is a source of anti-Semitism**, why? It is also called "**Har Chorev**", "**Chorev**" is to be understood as derived from "**Churban**"- desolation because from this event, desolation came down to the Goyim and **this is another reason for anti-Semitism as they feel threatened by us and our Torah.** But why? **Torah gives life!** As we know, the whole world earned its right to exist because the Jews accepted the Torah, so in what way is Torah bringing desolation to the Goyim? **It's coming down to this world saved all existence!**

Fake Form

We have mentioned in the past the Gemara in Sanhedrin that says the world will last 6000 years. 2000 years of "**Tohu**" - shapelessness; 2000 years of Torah; 2000 years of Moshiach; then for 1000 years the world will be desolate at the end of those 1000 years, in the eighth millennium, Hashem will renew the world. In what way was the world "**shapeless**" for the first 2000 years? There were great civilizations with great technological advancement. What was shapeless? Obviously in the eyes of the Torah, all the physical, technological, and political structures, were not "**real form**". The "**real form**" of the world comes with the Torah. Torah is not just a moral code of conduct that can be imposed on a society. Chazal taught us "Hashem looked into the Torah and from that created the world". That means that **Torah IS natural law** and when we conduct ourselves in line with the Torah, we are upholding the world. When we violate the Torah, we are destroying the world as we are forcing it to deviate from its program. Nobody can live in chaos. **People need structure, real or imagined in order to make sense out of life, and to have a social contract of how society should run.** Being blinded as a result of the sin of Adam and no longer naturally perceiving truth (see Moreh Nevuchim 1:2) Mankind did a very good job of **inventing structure. They**

contrived a structure of morality and government that worked for them and were content with. There was no genuine quest for truth and certainly no desire to serve the Creator, which is the whole point of creation: **we are to serve Him in accordance with His Will, which is NATURAL LAW, and earn Olam Haba.** They were not interested in seeking the **absolute truth** or even acknowledging that there is such a thing.

Torah vs Democracy

With these ideas **my Rebbe, Maran HaGaon HaRav Yaakov Weinberg, ZT"l the Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Yisrael** explained a well-known and astounding Chazal: prior to Hashem offering the Torah to the Jewish people, He first offered it to the nations of the world. He offered the Torah to the children of Yishmael and they asked, 'what's written in it'. Hashem said, 'do not steal'. They replied, 'theft is what we do' and they rejected the Torah. Hashem offered the Torah to the children of Eisov. They asked what 's written in it. Hashem said, 'do not kill'. They told Hashem, 'killing is what we do' and they rejected the Torah. Then he offered the Torah to the Jewish people who did not ask any questions but immediately said "Naaseh V'nishmah". The Rosh Yeshiva asked the following penetrating question: **There was never a society in history that legalized theft or murder!** Does the Koran allow for theft? Was someone allowed to murder freely in the Roman empire? Of course not. **No society could last for any length of time if its permitted to steal or kill.** The Rosh Yeshiva answered: of course, on the law books of all Arab countries, theft is outlawed and of course, in all the law books of the descendants of Eisov, murder is outlawed. **They are not talking about the "Torah's not stealing" and the "Torah's not killing", which are absolute values.** They are just talking about not killing and not stealing as a social contract, so society should not break down in absolute chaos. These are not absolute values. **They want the**

flexibility to decide when something should be outlawed as theft or not. They want to be able to confiscate, to charge high interest, tamper with markets and free trade and all other forms of '**legalized theft**'. Similarly, the children of Eisov don't want people murdering freely but **they want the flexibility to decide when something out to be outlawed as murder, or not.** Killing your fellow Aryan is murder. Ethnic cleansing, Euthanasia and Abortion are all forms of '**legalized murder**'. Nothing has changed for the nations of the world since the time of the giving of the Torah....

Conflicting Orders

Mankind lived with a fake structure and a fake morality from the beginning of time and the nations of the world continue to live with that fakeness and are not letting go. **The Torah that is a revelation of the real cosmic structure is a threat to their way of life.** Therefore, **the revelation of Torah brings upon them hatred** and they in turn hate us and **the revelation of Torah brings upon them desolation,** as the Jewish people are the vehicle to bring the Torah to earth for the purpose of filling and restructuring the whole earth. **Two opposing structures cannot coexist.** One will negate the other; the order of the Torah comes in total negation of the order that mankind invented for itself.

Rugged Untainted Purity

The fake order that mankind invented for themselves fills all habitable space. It is the spirit of society that is on dry land where people reside and even in the ocean, where people sail and do commerce (and piracy). That is the secret of what Chazal mean that wherever the Divine presence revealed itself, on the water and by the mountains, they "trembled and ran". **Habitable space had been contaminated and cannot withstand the revelation of the Divine presence that negates the order by which it currently runs.** However,

the desert, which is not habitable space, remains untainted by man's fake world order because man does not live there. That is the secret of what it means that **the desert does not run away but can withstand the revelation of the Divine presence because it is pure untainted space**. With this we can also understand what Chazal mean that all habitable space is destined to be laid desolate and all desert will bloom and become habitable space. **Habitable space is contaminated and therefore needs to be laid desolate to be purged. The desert has not been contaminated by the fake order of society and therefore, will surely bloom and blossom when the Divine presence will be revealed throughout the earth.** With this we can understand why the Torah had to be given in the desert, as Torah is a new world order that negates and replaces the fake world order man invented for himself. **No habitable space could tolerate the Torah at the time that the Torah was given**, as it was structured according to man's fake world order. Only the desert that was untainted by the fake world order, was receptive to the Torah.

Torah Order

As the Torah is the world order of the Jewish people, that's why **in the desert they found order**. The order of the encampment and order of travel was all centered around the Mishkan, which had its Kedusha as a result of the giving of the Torah and the Aron in its midst. The desert naturally has no order and therefore was receptive to the order of the Torah and **it is the order of the Torah that is the secret behind the order of the encampments and the travels in the desert**. This was not a one-time event. This was a whole nation living out Chazal's advice to anyone who wants to truly immerse himself in Torah; "exile yourself to a **"Makom Torah"** – a **'place' of Torah**", meaning, get out of society and put yourself in a **"place of Torah"**, where Torah is the order.

Open

The desert is also a metaphor for some very important positive traits that we need to inculcate in ourselves to make ourselves worthy of the Torah. The Midrash summed up this positive trait as to be **"Hefker"** - wide open for anybody. **"Wide-open"** means always open to learn something new. **The reason why people stop growing emotionally and intellectually is because they think they are finished**. Thinking they have it all figured out already, they put a lid on their growth by believing that there is nothing new for them to achieve or learn. **Being "wide open like the desert" is the recognition that we are never a finished product**. My Rebbe Maran HaGaon HaRav Moshe Shapira ZT"L explained that this is the secret that **our wise men** are called **"Talmidei Chachamim"**- students of wisdom **because our wise men perpetually get wiser until the day they die, because they are eternally students of wisdom**. Always open to learning something new is an attribute that must come before we receive the Torah **because the Torah is infinite for it is the Will and the Wisdom of an infinite G-d - One Torah for all generations and all time for all eternity**. Torah IS perpetually new. **People who think 'they know it all' are blind to its infinite being which is its perpetual newness**. With this we can understand the Chazal that Rashi brings in Parshas Yisro "on this day (present tense) they came to the Sinai desert" to teach you to always see Torah as new. The message is: **they came to the desert and they learnt from the desert to always be "wide open" and when being wide open like the desert, you see something new in Torah every single day, as you have not shut out new understanding by deluding yourself into thinking that you're a fully formed and finished**.

Freedom of Character Motion

Another aspect of what Chazal were alluding to that "the desert is open for all and all may travel through it", is that the **Torah put**

demands on us that one might think are mutually exclusive, the inclination for one negates the inclination for the other. We have to do kindness, have mercy and compassion, and yet we must have a strict justice system, fight evil and be prepared to wipe out entire nations, men, women and children if necessary. **If people would be stuck in a particular pattern of behavior an opposing pattern of behavior would be impossible for them and they would even argue against its moral validity.** A person has to be like “a desert that can be traveled by anybody in any direction”- Meaning to say **not stuck within any particular character traits.** In course of the 49 days of the Omer, we acquire “**Lev tov**” – a good heart which has the numerical value of 49, of which Rav Yochanan ben Zakai said, **that attribute is inclusive of all good attributes even good attributes that on paper would be mutually exclusive.** We have to be like the desert where anybody can go in any direction, meaning to say **to have all good attributes without being stuck in any of them.**

Malchus

This is what we are working on in this last week of the Omer, the week of Parshas Bamidbar. This is the week of the attribute of “**Malchus**”- Kingdom. Regarding this attribute, the Zohar says, “**it has nothing of its own**”(for example see Zohar Bereishis 181 A). **It views itself as totally empty and that’s why it is the vessel that can receive and receive and receive.** By no coincidence, the Biblical figure that is the vehicle of this attribute is Dovid HaMelech, whose humility is apparent from things that he said in course of Sefer Shmuel and expressions of his throughout Sefer Tehillim. This was “natural” for him, as Chazal tell us **he was meant to die at the time of his birth and Adam HaRishon gave him 70 years of his own life.** Dovid HaMelech had self-awareness that this was his function, to feel that he has nothing of his own and to be in perpetual self-annulment to Hashem, which

allows for unlimited reception – like the desert. On this seventh day of the seventh week, erev Shavuos, this Shabbos, which is the attribute of “**Malchus sheb’Malchus**” (which is also the midda of the day of Shabbos, as we say ‘Yismechu b’**malchuscha** Shomrei Shabbos’) the Jews declared all those years ago, **the “Wide open” unconditional, all-encompassing, unlimited commitment of Naaseh V’Nishmah.**

Land of Israel & Global Liberation

Once Torah can enter our realm in the ‘welcoming’ open free zone of the desert, **it needs to spread and take over the rest of the world that resists it.** The function of the land of Israel is **the place where the order of Torah is to be grafted onto the physical world and thus liberate the whole world from the fake world order invented by mankind.** This is the secret behind why despite the fact that Israel belongs to us it still needs to be conquered, **with conquering Israel we are conquering and liberating the whole world from the rest of mankind.** This is the secret behind why ALL nations of the world watch and get involved in whatever happens in Israel. May we liberate Israel speedily in our days, instill the order of Torah there, and with that **Hashem will be King over all the Earth.**



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