



# EVEN SHESIYA

SEFIRA READER PART 2

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## Introduction

During the 7 weeks of the Sefira we are counting and adding up figures. We don't say today is the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the Omer but rather "today are 5 days of the Omer". When we reach "weeks" we start adding up how many weeks there are. **During the Omer we are assembling the details which are the individual days together adding them up to create the principles called "weeks" and then adding the weeks together to make a complete closed system. when you have all seven weeks in place it's called that all reality has been united to a perfect hermetically sealed vessel that is capable to receive Torah.** This is the secret of what Chazal say (Uktzin 3:12): "Hashem did not find any vessel that holds blessing other than peace **שנאמר ה' עוז לעמו יתן ה' יברך את עמו בשלום** . We need peace between all the components of reality and that makes the vessel that holds the ultimate blessing that is **the Torah**. The Great threshold that we crossed at Lag B'Omer is that following Lag B'Omer every single day will either have "יסוד" (6<sup>th</sup> attribute – alluded to in the "Vav" of the Divine Name ) **which is inclusive of all the active forces** or "מלכות" (7<sup>th</sup> attribute alluded to the letter "Heh" in the Divine Name) **which is the vessel that receives all**. Following Lag B'Omer we are no longer in distinct details, **we are in these attributes that are all inclusive hubs**. We are tapping into that function of theirs because **that is the whole end goal of the Omer - to pull the pieces together**. With this we could understand why after Lag B'Omer the Talmidim of Rebbe Akiva no longer fight but they are in the second phase of "**not moving from there until they become loving of each other**" and this is the secret that the contribution of the surviving Talmidim of Rebbe Akiva that was to compile books that make up all the fundamental literature of Torah she'baal peh that Halacha is based on.

**My Rebbe Maran HaGaon HaRav Moshe Shapira זצ"ל** told us the following story from his youth: He was reading the "**HaTzofeh**" when he came across the a very big box in the 'classifieds' with a heading in big bold print **השבת אבודה - seeking the restoration of a lost object**. The man who took out the ad briefly tells his story: He was in **Dvinsk** by the famous **Rogotchover Gaon** on Lag B'Omer. He asks the **Rogotchover** "what is the idea behind Lag

B'omer?" The **Rogotchover** opened a **Yerushalmi** and proved from that **Yerushalmi** that the **עליה לרגל** - the ascent to Yerushalayim for Shavuos commenced on Lag B'omer. Meaning to say: **From Lag B'omer on we feel a connection to Shavuos and advance towards it at a rapid pace**. The man was so amazed with the genius of the **Rogotchover** that he failed to take note of the location of the **Yerushalmi** he was shown. He concluded his story saying: He is seeking his "**lost item**": who knows the **Yerushalmi** from which the **Rogotchover** made his point?

After passing through the "**Lag B'omer portal**" and finding ourselves on "**the other side of Sefiras Omer**", the feeling of rapid approach to Shavuos is everywhere and '**loudly echoed**' in the Parshas that we read between now and Shavuos.

It is the goal of this reader to explain the unique energies of the post – Lag B'omer Sefira leading to the next major land mark of Rosh Chodesh Sivan.

The power of Rosh Chodesh Sivan through Shavuos and beyond will be explained in the Shavuos Reader B'ezras Hashem.



# CHAPTER 1

## BEHAR

### The Commitment Shmitta & Sinai

This Parsha opens with the laws of Shmitta which were said at Har Sinai. Rashi brings the Chazal that says, just like Shmitta was taught in detail at Sinai so also all the Mitzvos were given in detail at Sinai. This begs the question: **Why was Shmitta chosen to be the prime example to teach us that all Mitzvos were taught in detail at Sinai?** Is there a special connection between Shmitta and Har Sinai? This is especially interesting to us as we are reading Parshas Behar following Lag B'Omer where we can feel that we are rapidly approaching Shavuot which commemorates the great event at Har Sinai. One cannot help noticing **the similarity in pattern between the way we count the Omer and in the way we count Shmitta and Yovel. During the Omer we count seven weeks and on the 50<sup>th</sup> day it's Shavuot and we count seven Shmittas and the 50<sup>th</sup> year is Yovel....**

### Har Sinai & servitude

The Parsha goes on to detail the laws of real estate in the land of Israel. Ancestral fields will be restored to the families of the original owners at Yovel. The connection is obvious as we are dealing with the laws of the land of Israel. However, later in the Parsha, the Torah talks about a topic seemingly only loosely related: a Jew's inalienable rights. Even if sold as a slave to a fellow Jew, he must be treated with a certain level of dignity and not be forced to do demeaning labor. And the Pasuk says, "for Me, the children of Israel are slaves. They are my slaves, that I took out of Egypt...." (25:55). This Pasuk is actually referenced by Chazal as defining what the "Eved Nirtza", the Jewish slave that wants extended slavery, is in violation of. His ear is pierced because "the ear heard **at Har Sinai** for Me the children of Israel are slaves" and this person went and acquired a master for himself (as this

person extended his slavery to his fellow Jew). The emphasis is "**heard at Har Sinai**". What does this idea of the Jewish people are slaves to Hashem alone have to do with **Har Sinai**? Seemingly our servitude to Hashem is like the Pasuk says, because we were liberated from Egypt and now we have to work for Hashem instead of Pharaoh. **Why is the emphasis that this pasuk was said at Har Sinai?** The truth is that Shmitta and our being slaves to Hashem are related. Our commitment to serve Hashem was when we declared "**נעשה ונשמע - we will do and we will hear**" The Pasuk says in Tehillim (103:20) "Bless Hashem his angels, the mighty of power, who **do** his word and **hear** the sound of His word". The Gemara says that this refers to the Jewish people who said "**Naaseh**" before "**Nishma**", as the Pasuk says, "**Do** His word and then after that to **hear** the sound of His word. The Midrash adds another P'shat: **that it's talking about those who observe Shmitta, they are the mighty ones of power.** We have seen that servitude to Hashem which is the commitment to "**Naaseh v'Nishma**" is related to **Shmitta** and its all related to the event that happened at **Har Sinai**.

### Cosmic upheaval

"Hashem '**descended**' on **Har Sinai**" (Shemos 19:20) . Rashi brings the Chazal that explains this to mean that **Hashem superimposed the heavenly over the earthly. Torah is in its essence came down into this world**, not information regarding the Torah in heaven, but rather the **Torah itself**. Bringing the Torah, the greatest spiritual entity created, into the world **brought supernatural sanctity to anything that could absorb it**. Generally speaking, **there are two major entities that absorb the sanctity of the Torah; the Jewish people and the land of Israel**. Even though we only got the "Ten Dibros" at the event at **Har Sinai**, it was already called that the Torah had already been given, in the sense of transferred from Heaven to earth. The position of Torah changed and was connected and grafted onto the Jewish people and the land of Israel.

### Tangible Ideas

Having something "in hand" is certainly something that you can see. This is the significance of what the *Pasuk* says, "and all the

nations **saw** the **sounds**" (Shemos 20:14). It should have said, "**heard** the sounds"! Rashi brings the *Chazal* that **they were able to see sound**. What this means to say is that generally words and dictates are something you hear about. It's not an entity you can see or hold in your hand. As a result of the great event at **Har Sinai**, they actually saw these commands as entities of Divine lights that they can **absorb** and that's what makes the Jewish people holy. It is because of what happened at **Har Sinai** that a Jew is too holy to work for any other human being, including his fellow Jew. He is so holy that he can only be a servant to Hashem. This is the secret of the sanctity of the **land of Israel** in general and the special sanctity of the **Beis HaMikdash** in particular. The land of Israel is called "the land that constantly the '**eyes of Hashem**' are in it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (Devarim 11:12). The land of Israel is the seat of Divine providence, **where Divine providence is revealed and visible**. The **Beis HaMikdash** in particular is where we go to "**see** the 'face of Hashem' three times a year" (Shemos 23:17; Devarim 31:11) as the **Shechina** itself is **visible** there. The land of Israel absorbed the sanctity of the Torah, to the point that, as the **Kuzari** explains (2:18) the land itself is "alive" and "obligated in *Mitzvos*" and keeps its own Shabbos which is **Shmitta** and all the other *Mitzvos* that pertain to the land, just like the Jewish people keep their *Mitzvos*.

## Committed to a Vision

In a relationship, the two parties need to reciprocate and be equally committed to each other. If Hashem is going to give us the Torah '**in hand**', thus making Torah visible, undeniable, tangible entity that can be **harnessed and absorbed**, then we have to do our part to be worthy of it and to treat the Torah like the way Hashem wants us to have it. Something you only heard about and never saw for yourself, you don't accept unless you understand it and agree with it. However, when something is a visible fact, you must accept it and deal with it whether you understand it or not. You don't need to understand how gravity works to be accepting of the fact that it has to be reckoned with. That's what our relationship with Torah has to be, if we want to relate to it as an tangible entity that we can harness. That's the secret of what it means when we said, 'we will **do** and we will **hear**' we will **do**

because it's a fact, whether we understand it or not. It just '**is**' - an observable, incontrovertible fact. Following that, we want to **hear** the understanding of it.

## Sefira & Shavuos : Shmitta & Yovel

All these ideas come together by **Shmitta**. We are challenged by Hashem to put our lives on the line and not go out and work for a whole year, trusting Him that He will take care of us and that is a commitment no less than "**Naaseh V'Nishma**"- to be committed in advance without any question. We are challenged to accept the Torah as real as visible fact and Hashem responds and **visibly** delivers on His promises. That's the secret that **the Shmitta pattern parallels the Sefira pattern**. During the **seven** weeks of the Sefira, we are working on refining all our middos so as we can make **our oath of commitment of "Naaseh V'Nishma" on the 49<sup>th</sup> day – the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> week** (see more on this in part one of the Sefira reader) - and with that commitment be worthy of **receiving the Torah in a manner that is visible and tangible on the 50<sup>th</sup> day**. Viewing the Jewish people as one big person, every Shmitta is like a week of the Omer where we've finalized being committed to Hashem in one of the facets of the Jewish ethos. Every Shmitta is like a week of the Omer where the Jewish people as a people have committed another facet of the seven facets of the persona (explained in detail in the next chapter) to be totally be subservient to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. **With every Shmitta, the people are saying, "Naaseh V'Nishma" on another facet of the seven facets that make up a persona**. The **50<sup>th</sup> year of Yovel**, is like the **50<sup>th</sup> day** where the Torah is fully revealed and just like at **Har Sinai** we became sanctified to be slaves to Hashem that should never serve any man, not even our fellow Jew, so also on **Yovel even the Eved Nirtza, the slave that sold himself 'forever' goes free to be a servant of Hashem alone**.



# CHAPTER 2

## BECHUKOSAI

### The Connecting Column - A Tribute to the Ramchal

#### Wrong Place & Reverse Order

“And I will remember my covenant with Yaakov and **also** my covenant with Yitzchak and **also** my covenant with Avraham and the land (of Israel) I will remember” (26:42). Why not simply write: ... and the covenant of Yitzchak and the Covenant of Avraham? Why the two extra **“also”**? Why are the Avos mentioned in the reverse order of chronology? This Pasuk is talking about being “remembered”, which is a message of consolation, is in the middle of the **“Tochacha”**- the series of curses as the next Pasuk says: “And the land will be empty from them and will make up all the shmitas that were missed as it is desolate from them and they will serve their sentence for their sins for they have spurned my laws....” why is “remembering of the covenant” mentioned while we’re still in the middle of the curses? It should have been left for the end with the other Pesukim of consolation, hope, and promises of redemption.

#### Stolen “Vav”?!?

Rashi points out that the name Yaakov in the Pasuk is spelled “full” with a letter **“Vav”**. Rashi explains based on Chazal that in five places in we will find Yaakov spelled “full” with a letter **“Vav”** and in five places we will find “Eliyahu” spelled missing the letter **“Vav”**. Chazal say that Yaakov confiscated these **“Vav”**s from Eliyahu and kept them as collateral and will only return them when Eliyahu comes to announce and bring about the redemption. What is the connection between Yaakov and Eliyahu and what is special about the letter **“Vav”** that makes it the “collateral” to force Eliyahu to announce and bring about the redemption?

## “Keri” & Sevens

A theme that comes up repeatedly is that we deepen our sinning and guilt by “going with Hashem **בְּקֵרִי**” which Rashi interprets as **“happenstance”** - We are not committed and consistent in our service of Hashem and Hashem responds in “a fury of **קֵרִי**” which also is to be **punished in a seven-fold way** as is mentioned explicitly in the Pasuk and explained by Rashi. **Why is it such a severe crime that we get hit in a seven-fold way?** More basically, what does it mean from Hashem’s side of things that He will punish us in a “fury of **Keri**”? If **“קֵרִי”** means **inconsistent**, how does that translate into being punished severely in a **“seven-fold”** way? Rashi at the very beginning of sefer Vayikra says that **“קֵרִי”** **also means “טומאה”- impurity** and we have learned in course of sefer Vayikra that **impurity goes in “sevens”**: 7 days of “Niddah”, 7 days of when giving birth, 7 days of “Zav”, the 7 days we lock up the “Metzora”, the 7 days of someone who came in contact with the corpse, etc. Most forms of “Tuma” are in multiples of 7 which runs parallel to being “punished seven-fold” for serving Hashem **“בְּקֵרִי”- inconsistently** and by happenstance. What is the connection? Is there a connection to the Omer which is 7 weeks?

## Blessings & Curses : Order & Chaos

As is well known, and we've discussed this many times in this forum, **we live in a world of sevens**. The prime example being the 7 days of the week. **The seven attributes that we praise Hashem with are the forces from which the physical realm is weaved: “For you Hashem is the 1) Gedula (Chesed) 2) the Gevura 3) the Tiferes 4) the Netzach 5) the Hod 6) for all that is in heaven and earth 7) For you Hashem is the Kingdom....”**. As we know from the supplementary prayer at the end of Sefiras Ha'Omer the seven weeks of the Omar correspond to the seven forces **which are also represented by the six edges of our three-dimensional world and the center**. These components can be in a harmonious integration and that situation is called “blessing”, “prosperity”, “peace”, “health” etc. When these forces work together in perfect harmony nothing is lacking because they supplement each other and enhance each other and that is “blessing” and all its many forms. What is to be “cursed”? What is



the cause of famine, poverty, sickness, and all other negative situations that we would call “cursed”? **“Matter can neither be created nor destroyed”**. When there is a famine it's not that there is less water on the globe, but rather the water of the ocean that become the clouds are simply going to the wrong places and raining there instead of over the fields or replenishing water supplies. If the economy is not doing well it's not that there are less resources on Earth, it's that the resources are not being properly harnessed and traded. The difference between war and peace is simply whether the different nations are staying within their boundaries and cooperating with each other or breaking out of their boundaries and seeking to conquer each other. Sickness and all forms of decline of health is that the balance of the body has been disrupted. **Two sum it up: “blessing” is when all the pieces of reality are assembled and configured correctly. “Curse” is when the components of reality are in chaos and not working together.** During the times of **“Golus”** - our being **dispersed** there isn't world peace, there isn't prosperity, and we have all the other problems that are enumerated in this week's parsha, and **NOT by coincidence! “Golus” is the cause for all things to go wrong.** The dispersal of the Jewish people causes a cosmic dispersal and therefore “nothing goes right”. Since there are seven pieces of reality that need to be properly assembled and configured, **when things go wrong it is a 7-fold problem.**

## “Tuma” & Sevens

With this we could understand the “measure for measure” that if we are disconnected from Hashem and only serve Him by happenstance, inconsistently, and without commitment which is **“קרי”**, that **disconnection is thrown right back to us in a “fury of קרי”** and the 7 forces of nature will also be disconnected and not committed to working together which brings a **sevenfold chaos because each one of the seven forces can be lethal if not properly harnessed.** With this we understand how **“קרי”** is also a synonym for **“טומאה”**. We have mentioned many times in the name of **my Rebbe Maran HaGaon HaRav Moshe Shapira זצ"ל** that **“Tuma” means sealed off.** Free passage to go anywhere including the Temple mount and to have relations is only for the pure. The **“Tameh”** is isolated, and that's why **“Tuma”** is

**in sevens because there is blockage and isolation I.E. disconnection between the 7 forces of nature.**

## The Central Hubs of the Puzzle

The 7 forces fit together like the pieces of the of a puzzle, **but not all the pieces are equal.** There are some that are **Central hubs** that hold most of the pieces together. The attribute of **“Tiferes”**, the attribute of Yaakov Avinu, is an inclusive attribute that holds together and reconciles **“Chesed”-kindness** with **“Gevura”- might** and because of its inclusiveness that is why Yaakov got the national name of Yisroel that retroactively is inclusive of Yitzchak and Avraham also (see **“Even Shesiya”** on parshas **“Vayetze”** 5779). Being in the center has many advantages among which is to be the most protected and inaccessible to invaders, as opposed to positions on the edge which vulnerable to outsiders and can easily be broken off from the main body. This is the secret that Yaakov's children were all perfect Jews, none of them left the fold, because he's in a wholesome Central position. As opposed to Yitzchak who had Eisov and Avraham who had Yishmael. With this the **Ramchal** explains the pasuk **“and I'll remember my covenant with Yaakov....”** The main connection is with Yaakov because he is wholesome and he is Central and does not deviate to the right or to the left **“and also...Yitzchak...”** despite the fact that he had Eisov, nonetheless Yitzchak's merits go exclusively to the Jewish people by virtue of his connection to Yaakov who is inclusive of all the Jewish people, those who come after him **and even those who come before him** and for that reason **“...and also.... Avraham...”** despite the fact that he had Yishmael, the **“real Avraham”** is incorporated in **“Yisroel”** which reveals itself with Yaakov. Yaakov is the anchor upon which the merit of Yitzchak and Avraham could **also** add itself to, despite the fact that they had non-Jewish progeny as well.

## “Vav”

This is the secret behind what we are taught that Yaakov represents the **“Vav”** in the Divine name. **“Vav”** grammatically is a connector (like the word **“and”**) and it is a **“line” that connects two points**, and the word **“Vav”** actually means connector. **It has a numerical value of six because it is the central hub that**

holds six out of the seven components of natural reality together. If you'd want to spell out the word "Vav" it would be spelled with two letters "Vav". This is the special relationship between Yaakov and Yosef. Rashi tells us in Parshas Vayeshev that Yosef resembled his father Yaakov and had a parallel life to him. Yosef's function was to be a unifier of the 12 tribes. Yaakov might be the center per se, or in the words of the Zohar the "big Vav". Yosef had the function of extending that unifying factor amongst the 12 tribes and all later generations that come from Yaakov, and hence is referred to as the "small Vav" meaning the hidden "Vav" that is present when we pronounce the word "Vav".

## Yosef & "Vav"

Yosef's extends the unity of Yaakov to the later generations and to challenges that come further down the timeline. He also has to make the final connection to the 7<sup>th</sup> attribute of "מלכות" -the Kingdom of Hashem, represented by Dovid HaMelech. "מלכות" is the vessel that receives everything as Chazal say: "all your deeds should be for the sake of the Name of Heaven" which is for the sake of Hashem's Kingdom. That is the secret behind what we find in the pasuk that the sixth attribute is called: "all that is in Heaven and Earth" and that is Yosef who's the final gatherer of all the resources before him. Yosef has to give it all to the vessel that receives all, which is the focal point for all we do: Hashem's Kingdom. That's the secret why "Kingdom" is mentioned in its own phrase: **it is the vessel that receives all. The first six are efforts and actions and achievements the 7th is the goal it's all directed at.** Yosef has to make that final connection and that is the secret of "Bris Milah" that Yosef worked so hard to maintain its sanctity and not defile it with the wife of Potiphar [*The "efforts" have to be focused at the "Name of Heaven" which is "Malchus" which is represented by the Jewish woman*]. Giving "efforts" to the gentiles or having them diffused or wasted is called "טומאת קרי" - **the opposite of the final CONNECTION that closes the circuit.** By no coincidence Yosef passed his test because "he saw the face of Yaakov in the window" meaning he drew strength from the big "Vav" and stayed connected.

## Connection within Dispersal

The supreme test that Yosef faced while in the depth of Egypt, isolated from his family, yet he "**held it together**" - he kept the faith and stayed within the fold. This set the precedent that when the Jews went to Egypt a short wild later and stayed there for centuries they did not assimilate, and they did not lose their faith. When Moshe announced the redemption they immediately believed. It was all in the Merit of the test that Yosef passed in his exile that gave us the strength to survive that exile. With this the Ramchal explains why this pasuk of "remembering the covenant of Yaakov....etc." is still in the middle of the "Tochacha": **it represents how we have a connection even within the dispersal.** The Jewish people will never totally lose their connection, in the depth of their being they'll always remain connected and **that is our insurance policy that we will survive the dispersal and make it out again.**

## Eliyahu & "Vav"

Eliyahu HaNavi serves a parallel function to Yosef. **He is the the angel that comes to every "Bris Milah" and his function is to restore connections.** weather he will identify who are the right for owners of objects that have to "rest until Eliyahu comes". He will resolve doubts in Halacha- "תיקו" and he will reveal to us which tribes we descend from. **Most importantly he will announce the redemption where we get reconnected with each other and reconnected with the land and the kingdom of the house of David.** That is the secret that he has "Vav" in his name - **that little "Vav" that Yosef represents.** With this the Ramchal explains the Chazal that Yaakov who is the source of unity took back the little "Vav" that is shared by Yosef and Eliyahu and hold it as collateral. During the time of "Golus" that little "Vav" is not performing its function of holding everything together. At the time of the redemption it will be given back to Eliyahu to do the function of pulling all the pieces together and restoring all the connections that were lost and making the final connection between us and the kingdom of heaven represented by Moshiach ben Dovid.

## Sefiras Ha'Omer & the Lag B'Omer threshold

During the 7 weeks of the Sefira we are counting and **adding up figures**. We don't say today is the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the Omer but rather "today **are 5 days** of the Omer". When we reach "weeks" we start adding up how many weeks there are. **During the omer we are assembling the details which are the individual days together adding them up to create the principles called "weeks" and then adding the weeks together to make a complete closed system. when you have all seven weeks in place it's called that all reality has been united to a perfect hermetically sealed vessel that is capable to receive Torah.** This is the secret of what Chazal say: "Hashem did not find any vessel that holds blessing other than peace" **We need peace between all the components of reality and that makes the vessel that holds the ultimate blessing of the Torah.** The Great threshold that we crossed at Lag B'Omer is that following Lag B'Omer every single day will either have "Yesod" (6<sup>th</sup> attribute -"Vav" ) which is inclusive of all the active forces or "Malchus" which is the vessel that receives all. As we wrote in the introduction: **Following Lag B'Omer we are no longer in distinct details, we are in these attributes that are all inclusive hubs.** We are tapping into that function of theirs because **that is the whole goal of the Omer - to pull the pieces together!**

## The Ramchal

We are writing this on Erev Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai the 26th of Iyar which is the attribute of "יָסוּד שְׁבִיּוּד". This sixth attribute represented by the letter "Vav" is squared by itself and this day is the Yahrzeit of the **Ramchal**. He had a fascinating life left an amazing legacy. One facet of the legacy that he left us was **his unique talent to make principles out of details and then to assemble those principles into an essential system.** This was his educational philosophy of how to make sense and unity out of details that are constantly subdividing, flying in all different directions out of control. He was able to 'zero in' on the central system in a manner of making principles and arranging them in an essential system, **providing a grasp on the infinite details. This is why his works are amazingly densely packed with information and yet so concise and so easy to retain.** This is

so parallel to making weeks out of days and then assembling those principles together like the way we assemble the weeks to each other to create a complete vessel for the Torah. Apropos to his life's mission, he completed his short (40) but amazingly productive life on "יָסוּד שְׁבִיּוּד".

זכותו יגן עלינו ועל כל ישראל





# CHAPTER 3

## BEHAR-BECHUKOSAI

### Reversing the flow of Time

#### Off by a week?

This week is a double Parsha so as to fulfill the Halacha recorded in the Gemara (Megilla 31b): “Ezra instituted for the Jewish people to read the curses in Vayikra before Shavuos and the curses in Devarim before Rosh Hashanah so that ‘the year should end with all its curses’ [and by contrast the New Year will begin with all its blessings]”. The Gemara goes on to explain that Shavuos is also considered a ‘new year’ because that’s when we are judged on the fruits of the tree. There are two difficulties: First of all, our custom is to actually read the ‘Tochacha’ in parshas Bechukosai two weeks before Shavuos! We are not fulfilling this law in the most literal sense, because there’s always the ‘buffer’ of parshas Bamidbar. This way of doing things is ancient, the Rambam brings down our custom in the laws of Tefillah. Why don't we fulfill the Halacha in its most literal sense and work out the ‘leining’ so as we read Bechukosai right before Shavuos? Why is it two weeks before? The other thing that needs to be understood is what this Halacha actually means. How does reading the Tochacha before Shavuos (and before Rosh Hashanah) accomplish that ‘the year will end with all its curses’?

#### Proof that blessings are good?

The first Midrash in Bechukosai brings the Pasuk from Tehillim (119:59) “I have calculated my path and I brought my legs back to your mitzvahs”. The Midrash offers several different interpretations to this and then starts relating it to our parsha where we have the curses. The Midrash explains that Dovid HaMelech was ‘calculating his path’ in the sense of taking a lesson from this week’s Parsha. He contrasted how Hashem promises us peace and all the blessings if we keep the Torah, and all the curses that

befall us if we don't. In continuation of that discussion it says “Dovid HaMelech was saying: I calculated the blessings and I calculated the curses. The blessings begin with the letter ‘Aleph’ (as per the opening word of our Parsha “אם” -if [you walk with my statutes] which starts with the letter ‘Aleph’) and the blessings end off with “and I will lead you **upright** – “קוממיות” which ends with the letter “Tav”. The blessings go from “Aleph” to “Tav” whereas the curses go from “Vav” to “Heh” as they begin (26:14) “ואם” - **and if** [you do not listen to me..] and end with “Heh” as the pasuk says (26:46) “in the hand of Moshe” (the last letter of the name משה is a “Heh”) and not only that but they are reverse (as the correct order of the Hebrew Alphabet is to progress from “Heh” to “Vav”) this is to tell us that if you are worthy I will convert the curses into blessings when you keep my Torah...

This Midrash requires a great deal of explanation. One would think that the difference between blessings and curses is readily apparent: one is pleasurable and the other one is painful! Why would Dovid HaMelech need an indication from the pesukim to realize that blessings are more worthwhile? What’s even harder to understand is what he sees in the pesukim: He notices that the blessing start with “Aleph” and end with “Tav” and the curses start with “Vav” and end with “Heh”. What is the significance of that? What can that possibly be telling him? And lastly, what does it mean that since the curses go from “vav” to “Heh”, which is against the order of the Hebrew Alphabet, therefore, if we are worthy, the curses turn to blessings? What does all this have to do with the letters “Vav” and “Heh”?

#### What’s Real?

Dovid HaMelech cannot be asking such a simple question as to what is more pleasurable or more painful. That’s not something that needs any type of proof from the scriptures! He is bothered by a much bigger and deeper question: **are the blessings and curses equally as real?** In our world there’s the good and the bad. **Are they equally real?** This question is linked to a much greater question: Hashem who is good, and only desires good, called the whole Creation by the Genesis “good”. So where does the evil come from? The **Rambam** dealt with this question (Moreh Nevuchim section 3 chapter 12) and makes a very keen

observation: **reality on the whole is good**, as Hashem himself declared at the time of creation. **All the things that we call “bad” are very specific circumstances that happened to specific people at specific times and places.** The person who is ‘complaining’ is only looking at himself and his particular situation at this particular point in time. But what is he and his particular circumstances at a particular time, relative to the whole of the universe and the whole of time? Even his particular suffering when viewed in the context of the whole may not be “bad” at all as it’s a part of a bigger picture which is “good”. It could be said that **the “whole” is good and the “bad” is in detailed exceptions to the “whole”.** Good and bad are not equally as real – as soon as the “whole” is revealed the “bad” no longer exists! That is what is alluded to when it says that Dovid HaMelech said: I saw that the blessings go from “Aleph” to “Tav”. “Aleph” to “Tav” represents not just the entirety of the Hebrew alphabet but the entirety of reality because the letters of the Hebrew alphabet make the words that created all of reality. **Blessings from “Aleph” to “Tav” means to say blessings are the “whole”. Curses are between “Vav” and “heh” means that the bad is not in the “whole”, it’s just in the single space between two details.**

## “Heh”

Why “Vav” and “Heh”? What is meant by reverse flow from “Vav” to “Heh”? “Heh” represents physical matter. Chazal (Menachos 29B) say that the Earthly realm was created with the letter “Heh” and that’s why it’s open at the bottom because in the Earthly realm is a hazardous place, easy to fall out, but one could always get back in through the opening on the side which represents Teshuva. The three legs of the letter “Heh” represent the three dimensions of the physical world, the way that it’s spread out, taking up a great deal of space represents matter that takes up space. The breaches represent the formlessness and disunity of matter.

## “VaV”

The letter “Vav” is a line which is a connector. The literal meaning of “Vav” in Hebrew is ‘connector’. And that is the unique function of this letter in Hebrew: it connects like the English word “and”. It also converts past tense to future tense and visa versa – representing

connecting time also (see more on this in sefira reader part 1 in the chapter on Rosh Chodesh Iyar). **The “Vav” represents the form that holds the matter together in a constructive configuration.** Matter was created in the first instant of the Genesis. It was shapeless and formless. In course of **six days** reality attained its form. The numerical value of “Vav” is six!

## Torah shebichtav and Torah shebaal peh: Matter & Form

**My Rebbe Maran HaGaon HaRav Moshe Shapira** ל"צ applied this idea to explain the “Echod Mi Yodea” we say at the end of the Seder: “Who knows ‘five’ (numerical value of “Heh”)?” I know ‘five’! ‘Five’ are the books of the Torah. Who knows ‘six’ (numerical value of “Vav”)?” I know ‘six’! ‘Six’ are the orders of the Mishnah”. The written law and oral law have a **“matter – form relationship”**. The ‘material’ is provided by the written law. There are pesukim all across the ‘Chumash’ that need to be drawn together, compared, contrasted, and resolved for any arising contradictions. That’s what the **six** orders of the Mishnah does! **The oral law is what collates, compares and contrasts, and resolves. It gives unifying form to the material scattered across the written law.** If you think about this you will realize that there’s not one single Mitzvah that can be performed just on the basis of how it’s written in the ‘Chumash’, even bris Milah, it never says where to cut! No mitzvah would have form to be manifest as a physical action if not for how the oral law gives **structure** to the information in the ‘Chumash’.

## “Heh” to “Vav”

When we look at the world around us, we see that all beginnings start with unformed matter and then as they develop, they take on form. That form gets further refined until they reach Peak perfection. A human embryo is ‘just water’ (in the words of the Gemara Yevamos 69B) during its first 40 days. On the 40<sup>th</sup> Day it gets a form. That form gets further refined until the time of birth. During childhood and adolescence, the form of the body and mind continues to develop until the person reaches full physical and mental maturity. The same is true in any product. it first starts with

the raw material be it metal, wood, or clay, and then it is formed and shaped into whatever product we are trying to make. This pattern in life follows the pattern of the Genesis itself. At first the world was just matter without form and in course of the 6 (“Vav”) days of creation Hashem formed everything out of the raw matter created at the first instant. That is what is represented by the “natural order” of **going from “Heh” to “Vav” – matter progressing from an amorphous state to a refined form.**

## “Vav” to “Heh”

However, after things reach their Peak perfection the process gets reversed and things lose their form and revert to just being formless matter. Whether it's the Aging of any living creature that as it ages the firmness and fitness of its body becomes ‘**unraveled**’ until it is too unhealthy to live. When it dies it further **unravels** to total decomposition. The same is true with the inanimate objects. When an object wears out, it didn't lose matter - **it's losing its form.** The law of conservation of matter is: “matter can be neither created nor destroyed”. ‘Decay’ means that it's losing its **form** and dissolving. **The reverse flow of going from “Vav” back to “Heh” represents regressing from a refined form back to formlessness.** This goes against the pattern of the Genesis itself. Where does the ‘reverse flow’ of regression comes from? The sin of Adam. Just as he was punished with mortality, so also, as the the pasuk says: “**accursed** is the Earth because of you”. The whole of reality was affected by his sin that is what brought “**curse**” into the world, which includes all types of decay and death.

## ‘Decomposition’ is artificial

Decay and death are totally against the nature that Hashem created. Things are supposed to go from matter to being formed and that form to being further refined to Peak Perfection and beyond. The process of decay and decomposition is something totally foreign brought into the world because of the sin of Adam. It is just as wrong as going from “Vav” back to “Heh”. **Since it's so unnatural that's why if we Merit Hashem will convert all the curses into blessings because “Curse” was never meant to be.** It is as unnatural as reversing the flow of the “Alef-Beis”. That's

why if we would only live by the Torah all nature would go back to its natural course of “Heh” to “Vav” with matter attaining the refinement of form and never regressing.

## New and Newer

What would have been if Adam would not have sinned? What will be in the future when there will be no more death, decay, and decomposition? What would be the significance of **time** in that perfect world? In our corrupted world the passage of time brings death, decay, and decomposition. We dread growing old because time will rob us of our vitality and bring us to our end. But this is only true in our corrupted world. What is the function of time in a world that doesn't know from death, decay, and decomposition? **The perfect world is a world of perpetual newness!** The “new time” would bring in new Divine lights, new Perfection of greater refinements to the form. We will be “going from strength to strength”. In that world **‘today’ everything is new and ‘tomorrow’ everything will be newer!**

## Torah never gets old

What is like this in our world? The Torah! **We are commanded to view the Torah as “new every day”.** Torah is from Hashem and is weaved out the “Alef – Beis” in the proper order that Hashem wanted for the world. Everyday Torah renews. The new day brings in new Divine lights and new understandings for the same piece of Torah you learned just the day before! **The Torah is on “Hashem's pace” and not by the pace of the world affected by the sin of Adam.**

## Reframing Time

Shavuos and Rosh Hashanah are both new beginnings. Rosh Hashanah ushers in a new year full of new energies and new opportunities. Shavuos is a new year because we recharge our connection to Hashem and his Torah. Torah itself is the ultimate source of newness. It is what Hashem used to create the world as “He looked into the Torah and created the world”. It remains His word and His will. Just like Hashem never gets old so also his

Torah is always fresh and new. That's why on Shavuot we are permitted to bring offerings from the **new grain** symbolizing that Shavuot enables us to feel **newness** in our Torah and in all our Divine service. **The 'spiritual' is impervious to the effects of the sin of Adam.** Before these renewals we need to correct our perception of the "flow of time". The notion that time depletes reality should be reframed as only being true as far as taking away the "bad" and moving it into oblivion. That's what it means: "let the year **wear out with all the curses**". Then we have to rise to a **new** perception: **time doesn't go - time comes** and brings in new energies and new beginnings. We get that power from Reading from the "Tochacha" (curses in the Torah). **When you connect the "bad things" with the Torah by reading what the Torah says about it – then the "bad" is subject to the power of the Torah.** In the Torah's reality the concept of "passage of time" is to bring the bad into Oblivion. But as far as the good nothing is ever lost and every new day just adds something new without taking away what you had the day before. This transition doesn't happen just before Shavuot, it actually happens this week! During the days of the Omer (and likewise during the days of Elul), we are working on ourselves and **refining** our Middos and from Lag b'omer and onwards we already feel our connection to Shavuot and the Torah. **At this point in the Omer we are so close that will already seeing time from The Torah perspective** and these days between now and Shavuot or not days of robbing us of our Vitality - **these are days of bringing us more and more light and more Aura from the Torah that we are rapidly approaching. This is the secret that in the final week of the Omer when historically the Jewish People reached the Sinai desert we are already commanded to see Torah Perpetually New** (see chapter 5).



# CHAPTER 4

## BAMIDBAR

### From Quantity to Infinity

#### To Count is to Love?

Sefer Bamidbar is known as "חומש הפקודים" - **The Book of Numbers** because it has in it the census of the Jewish people. In the opening of this parsha Moshe is commanded to conduct a census. Rashi (1:1) explains: "because of **Hashem's love** for the Jewish people he is constantly counting them. When they left Egypt he counted them, when they fell by the sin of the golden calf he counted them to know how many were left, and when Hashem comes to put his Divine Presence amongst them He counts them. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of Nisan the Mishkan was erected and on the first of Iyar He counted them"

How does counting show 'love'? How does Counting accomplish anything positive? This directly contradicts what the pasuk Shmos (30:12) says that when conducting the census the Jews have to give the half-shekel to be counted instead of counting them by head - so there should not be a plague! Rashi explains that when counting there is "Ayin Harah" – evil eye which can bring on calamities as happened with the census in the days of Dovid HaMelech. How is 'Counting' an act of love if it could endanger the counted? How are we to reconcile these two opposite aspects of being 'counted'?

#### What happened to 50?

We have we have become quite accustomed to Counting during the last 7 weeks as we are counting the Omer in preparation for Shavuot. How is counting a preparation for receiving the Torah? Furthermore, the Torah says to "count 50 days", but the 50<sup>th</sup> day, which is Shavuot itself, is not part of the count! If it's not counted,

it's not the 50<sup>th</sup>. Why isn't it counted and why is it called the 50<sup>th</sup> day?

## The uncountable Number

In the Haftarah (Hoshea 2) it says: "The **number** of the children of Israel will be like the sand of the sea **that cannot be measured and not counted** and instead of being called 'not my nation' they will be called 'children of the Living G-d' ". The first part of the pasuk is oxymoronic! There's a 'number' to the children of Israel which "cannot be measured nor counted" - if it's a 'number' then it in of itself is a definite 'count'! What is a 'number' that cannot be counted?

## Counting – Good or Bad?

We mentioned before Rashi that says that counting brings "ayin harah". There are cases where counting is not as lethal, but it is certainly devoid of blessing! The Gemara (Taanis 8b) says that a person who wants to measure how much grain he has is allowed to pray before the measurement "May there be blessing in this silo" but after he after he measured the grain he can no longer pray and it would be a "תפילת שוא" – a **Prayer in vain** because "there is no blessing in something weighed, or measured, or **counted**"! However, there's another aspect to counting. Regarding the laws of "Bitul" – annulling forbidden Food, the Gemara (Beitza 3b) states that something that is sold by individual count cannot be annulled – even in a thousand! Having its own distinct 'number' makes something too important to be annulled even though that **same number** strips it of all blessing and makes it vulnerable to "Ayin Hara". How do we reconcile these two aspects?

## Two Aspects of Counting

There is a dual nature to numbers. We mostly relate to numbers as a way to quantify. We use numbers to make measurements. Whether it's 3 ft. long, 3 light years away, weighs 3 lbs., or 3 objects in a box. Once something is measured it has been given **borders and limitations**. It has been determined that it is **so much and not more**. That aspect of counting and measuring is

limiting and therefore negates blessing. **Having been measured or counted establishes an absolute maximum for that which has been measured**. It can only be less moving forward. That's how counting facilitates "Ayin Harah". However, there is another aspect to this. The action of counting and measuring is a mental activity. **It is the mind taking the measurements**. Mathematics in Hebrew is "חשבון" the root of the word is "חשב" – to think. Assigning a number to something is a mental activity it is something that you are "חושב"- **thinking**. Something 'thought through' or 'calculated' is "חשוב" – **which also means important!** What makes something "important"? **If it's worth thinking about, if it's something worth taking up space in your mind and heart, if it's worthy of attention that's what makes it "חשוב"-important**. If something is important enough it gets its own number, and vice versa, if you gave it its own number then it must be important if you gave it that much thought. This explains why something that is sold by number cannot annulled. If it was important enough ("חשוב") that you thought about it ("חשב") and gave it a number ("חשבון"), it has your attention. That's what makes it "important" and thus never annulled.

## The Census in the Desert

We can now understand on an Elementary level the duality in the census in the desert. **It is an act of love. It shows that we're in "Hashem's thoughts"**. We are counted is an act of "Him thinking of us", showing that **we are rooted in the very thoughts that He had for creation itself as Rashi says: "בראשית" – for the 'first' – for the sake of the Jewish people who are called 'the first'**. Hashem envisioned the idea of the Jewish people even before he created the world! We are rooted in "His thoughts" and as an expression of that we are being 'counted'. **Having His omnipotent thoughts upon us makes us the eternal nation that can never be annulled!** However, since counting also ascribes a quantity, which negates blessing and makes us vulnerable to "Ayin Harah", the Torah said to count the half-shekel per person. **The 'quantifying aspect' will be on the coins, not on the people!** Hashem's thoughts are on the people, but the quantity is on the coins. These coins then went for the Mishkan and subsequently for the Korbonos that further atone and protect us from "Ayin Harah" (Rashi).



## Numbers vs Quantities

Numbers themselves are not quantities. They are used to make quantities but they themselves are pure Concepts. We have mentioned in the past that this is what's alluded to in what we say on Seder night in the "Echod mi yodea": "who knows one? I know one... who knows two? I know two....." Numbers are pure Concepts and we're looking for the Jewish idea that is the greatest expression of that concept. In the last chapter we discussed "5" and "6". In the **Pesach Reader** in the chapter on "**Echad mi Yodeah**" we explained "who knows three? I know three! Three are the forefathers of the Jewish people". What does the number "3" represent? One extreme, the opposite extreme, and the 'third' is the middle that could be the arbitrator and synthesizer between the two poles. These are our three forefathers Avraham whose 'Middah'-attribute is "Chesed"- kindness. Yitzchak whose "Middah" is the polar opposite of "Gevura" –might/judgment. Yaakov, the third forefather's "Middah" is "Tiferes" which is also called "Torah". "Tiferes" is inclusive of "Chesed" and "Gevurah" and the "Torah" decides when it's time for kindness and when it's time to show might and toughness, and **that is the secret that the Torah was given in the third month, as we will further explain in the Shavuot Reader IY**"H. We have demonstrated that numbers are just pure ideas- making quantities is just an application of those ideas! With this we can understand some of the paradoxes that we find in numbers. These paradoxes are resolved (at least in part) when we realized that numbers themselves aren't quantities. A few examples: There are infinite fractions between any two numbers, but there's no such thing as an infinite distance between two points. There is the irrational number that one could spend his whole lifetime writing out and still not be finished and will never finish – even though when applying to a quantity it might just be the mathematical expression of a very small thing. These paradoxes are because we are confusing 'numbers' with 'quantities'. The quantity may be very small but the 'number' is a concept which isn't physical and therefore has no physical limitations. Our minds automatically associate numbers with quantities, but they are much more than that. What if we could break through to **the pure number itself**, without applying it to quantities?

## Number with no Quantity

This is what the Navi was saying: "The **"number"** of the children of Israel will be like the sand of the sea that **cannot be measured or counted....**" – meaning to say that in the future there will be a **"number"** as in 'concept' to the Jewish people –meaning that **it will be apparent that they are the focus of "Hashem's thoughts"**! That **"number"** will be a pure unlimited infinite concept that **cannot be limited by any measurement or counting**. The Rambam in the Moreh Nevuchim (Section 1 chapter 7) says that **the term "child" applies to thoughts!** The thinker is the first generation, the thoughts produced are the second generation. As we are the **"unlimited Number"** in "Hashem's thoughts" thus we are called **".....children of the Living G-d"**

## Counting Middos

During the days of the Omer we are working on refining our **"מדות"- character traits**. Why are character traits called **"מדות"** which literally means 'measures'? Character traits are very distinct traits that have their 'boundaries' in definition and in action. For instance: kindness is only kindness. Kindness is not inclusive of toughness. Toughness is only toughness and not inclusive of kindness. Kindness is a character trait that will produce a very specific type of actions. Toughness is a character trait that will produce a totally different type of specific actions. They are indeed 'concrete measurements' with rigid definitions of distinct personality traits. Another aspect of their **limitations** is that they are purely traits, habits, programming, and instincts but **not moral values. Moral values are a matter of conscience!** The Gemara (Eirubin 100b) says that even if Torah would not have not been given we could have learned Mitzvos from the world around us. We could have learned not to steal from the ant. Ants do not steal from each other! If an ant touches something another ant will stay away even if the first ant is no longer holding it. But here's the catch: **they don't steal from each other, but they steal from us.** If we leave food out on the counter they will invade it! Ants don't steal because of instinct, not as a matter of conscience. They have a certain **"מדה"** which is only a 'measure' – a specific program, not

a moral value. Their 'programming' is only as far as each other, they have no 'programming' regarding other species. The Jewish people are not meant to copy the ants but to observe that the ants have this trait and **abstract that trait into a moral value and as a matter of conscience**. When it becomes a moral value then you don't steal from anybody. All character traits could be forces for good if they're under the guidance of a conscience that's making moral decisions. **Without a conscious even "good middos" can be propelling forces for destructive acts**. During the days of the Omer we count a different "middah" every day. **By counting we are investing thought into the middos. We are connecting them to the realm of thought and subjugating it to the conscious. Such a character trait is important ("חשוב") because it is thought out – not a habit!**

## Addition

**In our count we are adding up**. Not the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the omer but rather **"3 days in the omer"**. When character traits are distinct measurements onto their own they could be evil simply because they're not balanced with the other character traits. There's a time and place for each character trait. **In the adding we are connecting them to each other through thought. The conscience will be the arbitrator when it's time for a character trait to be active and when to give way. Through the adding, the character traits go beyond their distinct measurements to be cooperative and supplement each other**. By no coincidence there are 49 days to the omer. **The numerical value of the word "מדה" ("Mem" "Dalet" "Heh") is 49. In course of these 49 days we are connecting these distinct measurements (מידות) to the realm of thought and through that to each other**. That's what converts character traits into moral values.

## Shavuos – Beyond counting

The 50<sup>th</sup> day is the day of **the Torah itself** – the pure idea. The Torah is the "world of ideas" that all reality was based on. Just like the 50<sup>th</sup> is the yovel year which is called **"Forever"** is not just "another year" as it is the reset button for **all of reality**. All Jewish slaves go free and all ancestral inheritances go back to their original owners. **The "50<sup>th</sup>" is the number that is not to be**

**counted or measured! It's a pure concept that's above the idea of quantity**. It's only **called** the 50<sup>th</sup> because we prepared for it for 49 days – but it itself is not a quantity, it's a pure concept – it is the day of the **Torah itself**. That is why the 50<sup>th</sup> day is not counted! **It is the number that is not to be measured or counted because it is the pure infinite idea of the Torah!**



# CHAPTER 5

## BAMIDBAR

### 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 "**הפקר**"-no man's land, so also a person has to make himself "**הפקר**" to acquire the wisdom of the Torah". What does it mean to make oneself like "**הפקר**", 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 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 "הר סיני", which is to be understood as a derivative of "שנאה"- **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 "הר חורב", "חורב" is to be understood as derived from "חורבן"- **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 "תוהו" - **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, זצ"ל the Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Yisroel** 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 it's 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 **"מקום תורה"** – 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 **"הפקר"** - 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 ל"צ 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 must 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 "לב טוב" – **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 "**מלכות**"- **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 Shavuot, this Shabbos, which is the attribute of "**מלכות שבמלכות**" (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.**