

Shiur #2
Standing at Sinai
Awe
Michal Porath Zibman

1)

"אש קודש" רבי קלונימוס קלמן שפירא

שנת ת"ש, יתרו

בשבת זה הייתי בהחבא

אבל קבה"ת במדבר היתה... שלא תאמר במקום הזה אפשר לעבוד את ד', ובמקום הזה א"א לי, רק בכ"מ צריכים לעבוד את ד' ע"כ. לכן אילו קבלו ישראל את התורה בארצם בא"י היו חושבים שרק במקומם ובביתם אפשר להם לקיים אותה ולא כשהם בגולה ומטורדים, לכן נתן ד' להם התורה במדבר בדרך וטלטול שידעו שבכל מקום צריכים לקיימה, כנ"ל שלא יהא לבך חלוק על המקום.

Aish Kodesh, Rabbi Kalonimus Kalman Shapiro

1941, Parshat Yitro

During this time i was in hiding

Kabbalat HaTorah was in the desert. And perhaps its hinting to us that one should not say- In this location i can serve Gd, but in that location its impossible. In every place a person is, he should find a way to serve Gd. That is why the Torah wasnt given in the Land of Israel. Because if it was, then they would be of the thought that only in their Land and in their home the Torah can be kept, after all it was given there, and not when they are wandering amongst the nations. That is why Gd gave them the Torah in the desert, in an uncomfortable place so that they know that every place they are they have to keep the Torah

2)

רשי

ביום הזה. בראש חודש; לא הנה צריך לכתב אלא ביום ההוא, מהו ביום הנה? שיהיו דברי תורה חדשים עליך כאלו היום נתנם (ברכות ס"ג):

Rashi

THE SAME (lit., this) DAY — on the day of the New Moon. (Mekhilta; Shabbat 86b). It ought not to write ביום הזה, but ביום ההוא, “on that day”; what, then, is the force of the words “on this day”? Since they refer to the day when the Israelites came to Sinai to receive the Torah they

imply that the commands of the Torah should be to you each day as something new (not antiquated and something of which you have become tired), as though He had only given them to you for the first time on the day in question (Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 273; cf. Berakhot 63b).

3)

רשי

כה תאמר. בלשון הנה ונסדר הנה:

לבית יעקב. אלו הנשים, תאמר להן בלשון רכה (מכילתא):

ותגיד לבני ישראל. ענשין ודקדוקים פרש לזכרים, דברים הקשין כגידין (שבת פ"ז):

THUS SHALT THOU SAY — Thus, i. e. in this (the Hebrew) language (cf. Mekhilta) and in this form of words.

TO THE HOUSE OF JACOB — This denotes the women — to them you shall speak in gentle language (Mekhilta).

AND TELL THE CHILDREN (lit., the sons) OF ISRAEL — explain to the men the punishments and the details of the commandments in words that are as hard (distasteful) as wormwood (גידין) (cf. Shabbat 87a; Midrash טוב לקח

4)

רשי

סגלה. אוצר חביב, כמו "וסגלת מלכים" (קהלת ב') — כלי יקר ואבנים טובות שהמלכים גוזזים אותם, כך אתם תהיו לי סגלה משאר אמות; ולא תאמרו אתם לבדכם שלי ואין לי אחרים עמכם ומה יש לי עוד שתהא חבתכם נפרת:

Rashi

סגלה means a cherished treasure, the same as (Ecclesiastes 2:8) “and treasures (וסגלת) of kings” — costly vessels and precious stones which kings store up. In the same manner shall ye be unto Me a cherished treasure more than other peoples (Mekhilta) . Now do not say that ye alone belong to Me and that I have no other peoples together with (besides) you, and what else, therefore, have I by which the special love I bear you can be made evident; this is not so,

5)

הנצי"ב מוולוז'ין

וגם זה אינו תורה לפרש מהו קדושה ואין כל האדם שוין בזה ע"כ אינו עיקר ותנאי ליהדות כיון שאין בזה חק קבוע אבל רצון ה' בכך. זהו פ"י הא'. אבל לראשי ישראל יש פ"י שני. היינו והייתם לי וגו' הוא ג"כ בתנאי והיינו גמ"ח שתעשו לא יהיה בטבע האדם ודעת אנושי אלא יהיה הכל לש"ש. והיינו משמעות והייתם לי סגלה מכל העמים שכל הנהגתכם תסגלו לי לשמי

The Netziv of Volozhin

The Torah did not explain to us what holiness is, and everyone is different when it comes to holiness, so it cannot be the main thing and a condition which one can be Jewish, being that it is not consistent. But G-d desired us to be holy. That is one understanding. But another way to understand this is that G-d said I don't want you to do things only that are natural to you, but I want you to do things that are just for Me, in My Name. 'Segula' - All that you do, should be done in my name.

(6)

קדושת לוי רבי לוי יצחק מברדיטשוב

כי הנה צריך לדעת שענינו רואות לפעמים קשה מאוד לצדיק לעבוד את הבורא ברוך הוא וברוך שמו, ולכאורה תמוה הדבר. והענין שדבר זה דומה למלך שיש לו עבד נאמן שעובד אותו בשלימות והמלך רוצה שיהיה לזה העבד תענוג גדול מראה לו מדריגה קטנה קודם למדריגה גדולה בכדי שיהיה לו בכל פעם תענוג יותר גדול כשיגיע למדריגה גדולה מזו, כך אצל הצדיק, הקדוש ברוך הוא עושה זאת בכוונה שלא יוכל לעמוד תיכף במדריגה גדולה בכדי שיהיה לו אחר כך תענוג גדול מעבודת הבורא ברוך הוא וברוך שמו כשיבוא למדריגה גדולה מזו ומשום הכי מסתיר הקדוש ברוך הוא את עצמו מעבודת הצדיק, כי תענוג תמידיות אינו תענוג והבורא יתברך עשה זאת בכדי שיבוא לצדיק תענוג גדול עד אין שיעור. וזהו בחינות שהסתיר השם יתברך את עצמו לאוצר והעביר ראשון ראשון, רצה לומר מזה הפעולה שהסתיר השם יתברך התענוג מהם היה תמיד ראשון, דהיינו תענוג חדש. נמצא לפי זה הצדיק צריך ליפול לפעמים ממדריגתו בכדי שיבוא אחר כך לתענוג יותר גדול כנ"ל

Kedushat Levi- Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev

We must not try and deny that sometimes our own eyes see things that make it very difficult even for the righteous to serve the Lord, things that causes many of us puzzlement, or worse. We will try to use a parable in order to make this phenomenon easier to understand. A king has a very loyal servant who serves him with utter devotion. The king is desirous of providing this servant with a special pleasure. He presents this servant with a relatively minor task, before demanding of him a more difficult task. The effect is that the servant derives repeated satisfaction from having been able to carry out the task the king has set him. If G'd appears to "test" the righteous person again and again, His objective is to ensure that this person's delight after having performed the last "test" will be so much greater than if his path had been smooth all the time. This is also a reason why from time to time, G'd appears to "withdraw" from the righteous, as a string of uninterrupted pleasures, i.e. feelings of accomplishments, diminishes the value of each little accomplishment.

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When we mentioned that the righteous sometimes experiences difficulty in serving the Lord with a full heart, this did not mean that every righteous person undergoes such periods of puzzlement at G'd's providence for him. The spiritual development of the righteous varies from individual to individual; some, in order to continue their development as something fresh every morning, need to regress temporarily in order to recapture the sensation of making spiritual progress, whereas others, according to their temperament, do not need to experience what seems like spiritual regression at all.

7)

Gd in Search of Man, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, pgs 193-197

To us the great puzzle is, how is revelation possible? How to conceive that the eternally hidden should become revealed? Gd to the biblical man is more than flesh and blood can bear. One cannot see him, one cannot hear him and remain alive....Then a startling moment occurred: Gd appeared to Moses 'in the flame of fire out of a bush, and he looked and lo the bush was burning, it wasn't consumed....Perhaps this is the meaning of the burning bush. A new element was brought into being: Fire that burns but does not consume. It indicated a new order in Gd's relation to man, namely that to reveal he must conceal, and that to impart wisdom HE must hide His power. It made revelation possible,

The mountain burned with fire and was not consumed. To the Biblican man, the miracle of revelation wasn't only in the fact of man being able to endure it

The content of the Decalogue is utter plain, utterly simple 'Thou shall not kill, thou shall not steal. Yet the matter in which these words were proclaimed is shrouded in mystery....

With amazing consistency, the Bible records that the theophany's witnessed by Moses occurred in a cloud. Again and again we hear that Gd called to Moses/spoke to Moses...in the cloud.

We must neither willfully ignore nor abuse by allegorization these important terms. Whatever specific fact in may denote, it unequivocally conveys to the mind the fundamental trust that Gd was concealed even when He revealed, even while His voice became manifest, his essence remained hidden.....

What happened at Sinai?

....They perceived an awesome sight yet they dare not enter it.

So it was at Sinai. The masses perceived the external, they saw the sound of the trumpet and the thunder and lightings and the mountain on fire and they trembled at the sight of these- but they remained far off....At that moment the people of Israel not only were able to entertain a feeling but also share in an awe that overtook the world....Revelation means that the thick silence which

fills the endless distance between Gd and the human mind was pierced, and man was told that Gd is concerned with the affairs of man, and not only does man need Gd, but Gd is also in need of man. It is such knowledge that makes the soul of Israel immune to despair. Judaism is a way of thinking, not only a way of living'....At Sinai we have learned that spiritual values are not only aspirations in us but a response to a transcendent appeal addressed to us.

8)

R. Soloveitchik, Out of the Whirlwind, p. 14-15

Memory is not just the capacity of man to know events which lie in the past. Memory is experiential in nature; one does not simply recollect the past or just remember by-gones, but reexperiences that which has been, and quickens events that are seemingly dead. ... The reading of the Aseret ha-Dibberot is not only a didactic performance of limmud, but a restaging, a dramatic reenacting of mattan Torah. That is why the people rise when it is read... The rubric of "In every generation a person is required to see himself as if he had gone out of Egypt" is applicable not only to the Exodus, but to all events which the Torah has commanded us to remember and not forget. ... Experiential memory somehow erases the borderline separating by-gone from present experiences. It does not just recollect the past, but reexperiences whatever has been