



RABBI MOSHE

TARAGIN

Ram, Yeshivat Har Eztion

SHAVUOT



Geulas Yisrael #3 The “Israeli” Har Sinai

Torah is eternal and exists outside of time and outside of space. For this reason, it was delivered in a barren desert landscape beyond human civilization. Similarly, its date of delivery is concealed – at least by the Torah itself. The word of G-d is incumbent upon Jews regardless of *where* we live or *when* we live. The delivery of His will is not geo-tagged nor is the event clearly pinned to a particular date.

Even though G-d’s autonomous word exists outside of ‘place’, it does resonate differently in His land. For this reason, it was absolutely crucial to re-enact the epic Sinai experience upon arrival in Israel. Soon after entering the land, the Jews restaged Sinai upon the two northern mountains of Gerizim and Eival. Settling Israel without recreating Har Sinai and reinforcing its fundamentals is inconceivable. Our warrant to this land is our embrace of G-d’s will and the historical agenda of broadcasting G-d’s word from the land of Israel. Upon first entering our home, the warrant for our residence must be reaffirmed and an

“Israeli” Har Sinai must be staged.

However, the Israeli Har Sinai was dramatically different from the earlier desert ceremony. At Har Sinai the Jews were completely passive- attentively listening and enthusiastically embracing- but completely reactive. The pyrotechnics at Sinai were so fearsome that, by some accounts, the Jews even fled the scene, only to be forcibly retrieved by Moshe. On that desert morning only one voice was to be heard and it emanated from Heaven, descending upon Mankind.

By contrast, at the Israeli Har Sinai, Torah is distilled and presented by a human audience: six tribes ascended one mountain while the remaining population ascended the second cliff. A faction of Levites stood in the valley between the two cliffs, announcing each commandment. Listening to these avowals, the respective groups upon the highlands responded by declaring “Amen”. Further accentuating the human role, the Israeli version of the luchot- Torah inscribed on two large slabs of stone- were inscribed by humans and not by the Divine hand. It is unclear what was engraved upon the stone slabs at the mountains of Gerizim and Eival. Did these slabs contain a selection of mitzvot or possibly, the entire Torah? Either way there is a distinctly

human tone to Israeli “stones” as opposed to the desert luchos. Though Torah predates time, it must be applied by humans to daily life and to a sometimes, unaccommodating world. Nowhere is this application more challenging and all-inclusive than in the land of Israel. When directing the broad affairs of State, it is difficult to shrink Torah to the protective horizons of the beit midrash or study halls. Torah’s spirit and law must be infused in every feature of human and national experience. This expansive application of Torah -amplified in Israel – was symbolized at these two mountains by empowering human beings as anchors and authors.

Additionally, the Israeli Har Sinai concluded with a general appeal to uphold the “entirety” of Torah (*arur asher lo yakim et divrei Hatorah hazot*). This general mandate – excluded from the original Har Sinai- reminded us that, upon entering Israel, we now possessed *lateral* responsibility for other Jews. The mandate of “*kol yisrael areivim zeh lazeh*” only began when we entered the land and began forging a community. Unquestionably, lateral accountability for every Jew exists outside of Israel, but it is primarily realized on an *individual* level- promoting individual religious experience for other Jews. Life in Israel demands a more *communal areivut*—concerning the religious and moral spirit of cities, communities and society at large. Sinai in Israel took on an added dimension; human authorship implied both more proactive human authorship as well as more lateral social responsibility. It is true now as it was then. ■

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