



PROBING

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THE PROPHETS

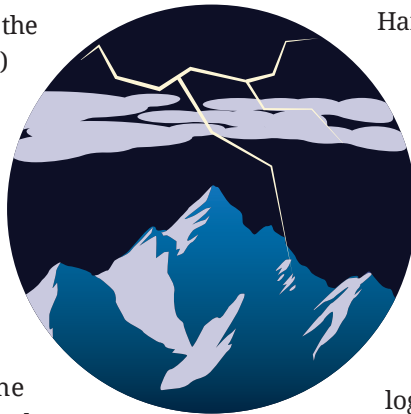
K'vodo Maleh Olam

“Ein Maftirin B'Merkava”

As Sefer Yechezkel opens, we read of Hashem's revelation to Yechezkel, the “Ma'aseh Merkavah”, a prophetic vision so impactful, so mystical and so easily misunderstood that the Mishna in Megilla (25a) states: “Ein Maftirin B'Merkava”, that we do not choose this prophecy to be read publicly as a haftarah.

And yet, we do!

Now, although the Mishna includes the view of Rabbi Yehuda that it is permissible and the Gemara states (31a) that we follow his view it is, nonetheless, rather curious that the halacha was established according to the view of the minority opinion. Chazal must have found a powerful reason why they ignored the majority opinion and accepted the view of Rabbi Yehuda to allow its recitation. So we are challenged to uncover what that reason might have been and why our Rabbis decided that it was particularly



fitting for the holiday of Shavuot.

On a simple level, as Rashi states in his commentary on that Gemara, on Shavuot Israel experienced a revelation as well. And, although the Torah mentions that they only heard Hashem's words and did not see any image of Hashem (see D'varim 4: 12), Rashi relies on the Tanchuma and adds that Israel saw 22,000 chariots of angels that accompanied G-d to Har Sinai.

Rav Yehudah Shaviv suggests the underlying logic of the Tanchuma by explaining that, if Hashem shared the vision of a heavenly chariot accompanied by fire and cloud to but one person, then it is only logical that thousands of people who saw also a prophetic vision accompanied by fire and clouds would have been shown thousands of chariots.

The Zohar simply posits that Yechezkel's vision took place on Shavuot, as did that of B'nai Yisrael, which is why Chazal insisted that this perek be read on Shavuot.

Rav Shaviv gives his own reason as to why this selection was chosen as the haftarah for Chag Shavuot. The theophany experienced

by Israel at Har Sinai is the most powerful revelation of Hashem's glory ever as it was witnessed by two to three million people!!! As one of my rebbeim once said, it was an unimpeachable historical event, having millions of onlookers who could testify to its veracity.

Yechezkel, who prophesied in Galut, also had a revelation. As Israel was entering its first Diaspora exile, as the people had seen the destruction of their land and their Temple, it was only natural for them to believe that Hashem had abandoned them. Along comes Yechezkel's description of his theophany, one that took place NOT at Har Sinai nor in Eretz Yisrael, but at N'har K'var in Babylonia (note the seemingly unnecessary inclusion of the precise place of the revelation in the first pasuk of Sefer Yechezkel). That important fact taught the exiles that they were NOT abandoned and that Hashem is with them even in Galut.

And he can reveal Himself to His prophets in the Diaspora as well.

How sensitive and brilliant were our Rabbis who left such an important message to the newly exiled nation. A nation that must understand how G-d watches over them at the sanctified Mt. Sinai, in the Holy Land and even in the darkness of Exile. And this is why we follow the view of Rabbi Yehudah. ■

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