



## PROBING THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER  
FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

# “M’lo Khol Ha’aretz K’vodo”

On Chag Shavuot, we read the opening perek of Sefer Yechezkel as the haftarah for the day. It is in this chapter that the navi portrays the “Ma’aseh Mercava”, Hashem’s revelation of His heavenly throne, to Yechezkel. This prophetic vision was considered so impactful, so mystical and so easily misunderstood, that the Mishna in Megilla (25a) states: “Ein Maftirin B’Merkava”, that we may **not** read this prophecy for the haftarah... so why do we???

The answer lies in the self- same Mishna, where it quotes the view of Rabbi Yehuda who **does** permit the reading and, furthermore, the Gemara (on 31a) states that we follow his view. It is, however, quite rare to find the Talmud establishing the halacha according to the view of the minority! Unquestionably, Chazal must have found a powerful reason to ignore the majority opinion in favor of accepting the view of Rabbi Yehuda, to allow the public recitation of “Ma’aseh Mercava”. It is up to us, therefore, to uncover what reason they might

have had and why our Rabbis felt it particularly fitting for the holiday of Shavuot.

In his commentary on that Gemara, Rashi states that Shavuot marks the day when, like Yechezkel, Israel experienced a revelation. And, although the Torah mentions that Israel heard Hashem’s words but saw no image of Him (see D’varim 4; 12), the Tanchuma states that they **did** see 22, 000 chariots of angels that accompanied G-d to Har Sinai. Rashi relies on that Tanchuma.

Rav Yehudah Shaviv, attempting to unravel the underlying logic of the Tanchuma suggests that the scholars assumed that, if Hashem shared the vision of a heavenly chariot accompanied by fire and cloud to but one person, Yechezkel, it is only logical that, if thousands of people also saw a prophetic vision accompanied by fire and clouds, Hashem would have certainly shown thousands of chariots to such a gathering.

The Zohar, on the other hand, simply posits

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that Yechezkel's vision took place on Shavuot, as did that of B'nai Yisrael, and this was why Chazal insisted that it be read on Shavuot.

Rav Shaviv, however, shares his own reason for Chazal's choice of this haftarah. The theophany experienced by Israel at Har Sinai was the most powerful revelation of Hashem's glory ever, having been witnessed by 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 the galut, also had a revelation. As Israel entered its first Diaspora after having seen the destruction of their land and their Temple, it was only natural for them to believe that Hashem had abandoned them. Yechezkel's then opens his prophecies with **his** theophany, that took place **NOT** at Har Sinai **NOR** in Eretz Yisrael, but at N'har K'var in Babylonia. That important fact taught the exiles that they were **NOT** abandoned - because Hashem is with them even in galut.

If so, we must realize how wise and sensitive our Rabbis were by leaving such an important message to the newly exiled nation. Our nation should understand how G-d watches over them at the sanctified Mt. Sinai, in the Holy Land and even in the darkness of Exile.

Two thousand years of the horrors of galut should have taught us that.

Indeed, "m'lo khol ha'aretz k'vodo". ■

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