

CHAIM MEIR'IM
THE ZUTSHKA
PARSHA BLETTEL

Illuminating our lives with the light and fire of Toras haChassidus

PARSHAS BAMIDBAR



*Lovingly Dedicated in Memory of
R' Chaim ben R' Yisrael and R' Meir ben R' Yechezkel*

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The holy Torah was given to *Bnei Yisroel* in the *midbar* - in a desert wasteland. The purpose of choosing such a location was to teach us an eternal lesson: this demonstrates for us the proper path and the very foundation for accepting and receiving the Torah and fulfilling it. Without having *Matan Torah* in a desert wasteland a person might mistakenly think that although it is true that we are obligated to fulfill all the laws of the Torah that we received on Mount Sinai, however that is only on condition that each of us is doing well and everything is going according to plan, life is easy, and things are well. Each of us has his vineyard, his orchard, we live idyllic lives of peace and tranquility by the banks of the river and have no lack nor desire that remains unfulfilled. Only under such blissful conditions of plenty with no want, only then are we expected to fulfill the words of the holy Torah.

However, if Heaven forbid, we are in a state of disorder where we are worried, distressed and under conditions of privation and poverty. Obviously, under such dire circumstance we are not expected to fulfill the Torah, our acceptance was not on such condition. Are we expected to fulfill the Torah under such conditions?! The answer is that we were given the Torah in a desert wasteland on Mount Sinai in the middle of nowhere expressly for the purpose to demonstrate that under any and all conditions we are expected to fulfill the holy Torah with self-sacrifice and *mesirus nefesh*. Even when we are exiled and have nothing, no tranquility or peace of mind, no home or possessions, we still accepted the Torah unconditionally, under any and all circumstances and that is the eternal message of the *Midbar Sinai*, to accept the Torah unconditionally and all circumstances as the *pasuk* says Devarim 32:10 If you are found in the desert in a place of desolation.

By the very fact that the Torah was given to us in such a location as a barren wasteland, this itself instilled in us the power and ability to withstand all circumstances. It gives us the power and wherewithal to bind and attach ourselves to the holy Torah, and therefore wherever we are found, even in some remote corner of the world, far-flung and distant we can always remember to hold on strong to the words of Hashem and attach our hearts and bind them to Hashem and His Divine service and avodah.

This is the reason why the ten commandments were inscribed in such a manner that they were legible and could be read from any angle and view, on either side of the tablets, to teach us that in any circumstance that a person finds himself he needs to be able to plainly see before him the ten commandments: the Divine word of Hashem. He should never imagine that in some place, under some circumstance, in some way the Torah no longer applies to him anymore!

The Zutshka Rebbe then told the following humorous anecdote:

'There was once a coachman and a wagon driver who was sued by his hire. He had promised to take the customer to a certain place on a certain date, but he had failed to show up. His failure to keep his word and drive the customer had caused the businessman a considerable loss. "Your honor the Rav!" the wagon driver tried to argue with the Dayan and plead his case, "I simply could not fulfill my word, you see it was cold and it had snowed, and I was too cold to go!" he announced, trying to sound like that settled the matter. The coachman was astounded when the Dayan handed down his verdict: "Guilty as charged! You are liable, you failed to fulfill your promise and you did not keep your word!" "Wait just a moment, hang on!" the wagon driver challenged, "where does it say that I am liable?!" "It says so in the Torah," responded the Dayan. "Aha!" the wagon driver was sure he saw a loophole, "Now tell me your honor Kavod Ha'Rav, during what month was the Torah given to us?" "In the month of Sivan," answered the Dayan. You see," said the coachman, "Nu, *avadai* - surely in Sivan it is warm nice weather, no snow or freezing subzero temperatures! That is surely the reason why the law is written in such a way against me! Had the Torah been given during the harsh freezing cold winter months, then the law would surely have been on my side, the Torah would have been written differently!" concluded the ignorant wagon driver.'

And so, it is with many of us, concluded the *tzadik*. In order to prove all the fools wrong, that the Torah only applies under certain specific circumstances and conditions, only to certain times and places, for that very reason Hashem gave us the Torah in a desert wasteland, in a desolate place that demonstrates that the Torah was given to apply in any time and place, under all circumstances and under any and all conditions, the words and laws of our holy Torah are binding on us forever and ever!

The Zutshka Rebbe concluded the anecdote and added the following personal tale:

When we were in the lager - during World War II when the rebbe and his family were held by the accursed Nazis during the Holocaust in the camps, I turned to those around me in the camp and said to them: "When we were all back home, each living our lives peacefully there were many times when we excused ourselves and said that our lack of *avodas* Hashem, our lack of Torah study and efforts to serve Hashem and fulfill His *mitzvos* was due to some inability because we lacked something and that this so to speak prevented us from doing what we could, if only we had more time, more money or some other excuse. Now, however, we have been taught a lesson that truly we have the ability, the *emess* is that yes, we can do it, under any and all circumstances we can serve Hashem and we need nothing, we can still do our best and utmost despite the poverty, privation and lack." If only we could always remember those lessons, he intoned, that way we would never cease studying Torah and fulfilling *mitzvos* with no excuses whatsoever. (תדש"ם)