



“He met him at the mountain of G-d, and he kissed him”

The Loving Reunion of Moshe and Aharon Paved the Way for All of Yisrael to Receive the Torah at Har Sinai as a Unified Body with One Heart

This week's parsha is parshas Shemos. It records the fascinating, initial revelation of HKB"H to Moshe Rabeinu (Shemos 3, 1):

“ומשה היה רועה את צאן יתרו חותנו כהן מדין, וינהג את הצאן אחר המדבר ויבוא אל הר האלקים חורבה. וירא מלאך ה' אליו בלבת אש מתוך הסנה, וירא והנה הסנה בוער באש והסנה איננו אוכל. ויאמר משה אסורה נא ואראה את המראה הגדול הזה מדוע לא יבער הסנה. וירא ה' כי סר לראות ויקרא אליו אלקים מתוך הסנה ויאמר משה משה ויאמר הנני, ויאמר אל תקרב הלום של נעליך מעל רגליך, כי המקום אשר אתה עומד עליו אדמת קודש הוא.”

Moshe was grazing the sheep of his father-in-law Yisro, the priest of Midyan; he guided the sheep far into the wilderness, and he arrived at the Mountain of G-d, toward Chorev. An angel of Hashem appeared to him in a flame of fire from within the thorn bush. He saw and behold!—the bush was burning in the fire, but the bush was not consumed. Moshe thought, “Let me turn aside now and see this great sight—why will the bush not be burned?” Hashem saw that he turned aside to see; and G-d called out to him from amid the bush and said, “Moshe, Moshe,” and he replied, “Here I am!” He said, “Do not come closer to this spot, take your shoes off of your feet, for the place upon which you stand is holy ground.”

Our blessed sages teach us that this revelation of the burning bush took place on Har Sinai. Here is a pertinent exposition in the Midrash (S.R. 2, 4): **“And he arrived at the mountain of G-d toward Chorev.” It (this mountain) has five names: Har Elokim, Har Bashan, Har Gavnunim, Har Chorev, and Har Sinai.** We find a related comment in the Targum YoNasan on

the words: **“For the place upon which you stand is holy ground”—on it, you are destined to receive the Torah and teach it to Bnei Yisrael.**

We find another related comment from Rabeinu Bachayei, where he adds a fascinating “remez” concerning HKB"H's admonition to Moshe Rabeinu: **“של” —“take your shoes off of your feet.”** He refers to a teaching in the Talmud Yerushalmi (shekalim 1, 1): **“התורה שנתן לו הקב"ה למשה, ניתנה לו אש לבנה חרותה באש שחורה”—the Torah that HKB"H gave to Moshe was given to him as white fire etched with black fire.** Now, the term **“של” —“take off”**—is the first letters of **שחורה לבנה —black, white.** Thus, it alludes to the fact that Yisrael were destined to receive the Torah, which was transmitted as black fire upon white fire, at this location.

Consider the profound difference between this revelation on Har Sinai, while Bnei Yisrael were still slaves in exile in Mitzrayim and the future revelation on Har Sinai at Matan Torah. Here, HKB"H reveals himself to Moshe Rabeinu as follows: **“An angel of Hashem appeared to him in a flame of fire from within the thorn bush.”** Rashi comments: **“From within the thorn bush”—and not in any other tree, to reflect that “I am with him (the people of Yisrael) in distress.”** In contrast, at Matan Torah, HKB"H reveals Himself to the entirety of Yisrael in His full glory and splendor, as it is written (ibid. 19, 20): **“זירד ה' על הר סיני”—Hashem descended upon Har Sinai.** The Midrash expounds (ibid. 29, 2): **Rabbi Avdimi of Chaifa said: Twenty-two thousand (malachim) descended with HKB"H to Sinai, as it is stated (Tehillim 68, 18): “G-d's entourage (chariot) is**

twice ten thousand, thousands of malachim”—the most beautiful and prestigious.

In any event, we learn from here that prior to Yisrael's exodus from Mitzrayim, HKB"H rested His Shechinah on Har Sinai and revealed Himself to Moshe Rabeinu. This was in preparation of Matan Torah, when HKB"H was destined to descend onto Har Sinai accompanied by an entourage of heavenly creatures. For, it was in the merit of receiving the Torah that Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim. HKB"H conveys this Moshe Rabeinu at the revelation of the burning bush (Shemos 3, 12): **”בהוציאך את העם ממצרים תעבדון את האלקים על ההר הזה”—when you take the people out of Mitzrayim, you will worship G-d on this mountain.** Rashi comments: **And in response to that which you asked, “What merit does Yisrael have that they should depart from Mitzrayim?” I have a matter of great consequence dependent on this exodus. For they are destined to receive the Torah on this mountain three months after they depart Mitzrayim.**

The Elation and Excitement of Moshe Rabeinu and Har Sinai Who Were Destined to Meet from the Six Days of Creation

We find an intriguing passage in the Zohar hakadosh (Shemos 21a) related to the mutual elation of Moshe Rabeinu and Har Sinai when they met each other for the first time at the revelation of the burning bush:

Rabbi Yossi said: From the day Moshe was born, “ruach hakodesh” did not leave him. He foresaw with “ruach hakodesh” that that midbar was holy and ready to receive the burden of the sovereignty of Heaven on it. What did he do? He led the flocks into the midbar . . . Rabbi Yehudah said: That stone that attracts iron (a magnet), when a needle comes near to it, it (the needle) jumps on it; such was the case with Moshe and Har Sinai when they saw each other; he (Moshe) jumped on it. Thus, it is written, “He came to the Mountain of G-d toward Chorev.” Rabbi Abba said: They were meant for each other from the six days of creation. That day, the mountain got excited at the presence of Moshe; when it saw him enter into its midst and jumped toward it, the mountain stood still, implying that they were happy with each other.

Rabbi Yanai said: Moshe knew that that mountain was the Mountain of G-d, as it is written, “He arrived at the Mountain of G-d.” As we learned: What did Moshe see on that mountain? He saw birds taking off and spreading their wings but without crashing into him. Rabbi Yitzchak said: He saw birds taking off and flying from there, and alighting (falling) at Moshe's feet. He immediately sensed what was transpiring; so, he left the flocks at the edge of the midbar, and he entered alone.

The intimate relationship between Moshe Rabeinu and Har Sinai is obvious. For, as we know, HKB"H gave Yisrael the holy Torah on Har Sinai via Moshe Rabeinu. In his sacred teachings, the Noam Elimelech (Lech Lecha) elaborates on this relationship based on a teaching in the Mishnah (Avos 1, 1): **”משה קיבל תורה מסיני”—Moshe received the Torah from Sinai.**

He explains what this means in keeping with the following Gemara (Sotah 5a): **”אמר רבי יוסף, לעולם ילמד אדם מדעת קונו, שהרי הקדוש ברוך הוא הגיח כל הרים וגבעות והשרה שכניתו על הר סיני.”** **Rabbi Yosef said: A person should always learn from the good sense of his Creator—for behold, when HKB"H gave the Torah, He abandoned all the great mountains and hills and instead rested His Shechinah on Har Sinai.** Rashi comments that we are being taught to value modesty and humility from the fact that HKB"H passed over more majestic and taller mountains, such as Har Savor and Har Carmel, in order to give the Torah on the lowly, less imposing Har Sinai. It was specifically for this very same reason that HKB"H chose to give Yisrael the Torah via Moshe Rabeinu—because he was the humblest of men. As the Torah attests (Bamidbar 12, 3): **”והאיש משה עניו מאד מכל האדם”—now the man Moshe was exceedingly humble, more so than any person on the face of the earth!** This then is the message conveyed by the teaching: **“Moshe received the Torah from Sinai”—**he shared the lowly, unimposing, humble nature of Sinai.

Let us embellish his sacred thought. It is evident from Rabbi Yosef's comment: **A person should always learn from the good sense of his Creator—for behold, when HKB"H gave the Torah, He abandoned all the great mountains and hills and instead rested His Shechinah on Har Sinai—that**

HKB"H Himself displayed the midah of humility when he descended from His heavenly throne to rest His holy Shechinah on the lowliest of mountains. The Gemara expresses this fact as follows (Megillah 31a): **כל מקום—wherever you find HKB"H's greatness, you find His humility.**

Accordingly, at Matan Torah, there was a convergence of these three personifications of humility—HKB"H, Har Sinai, and Moshe Rabeinu. This exemplifies the concept of (Koheles 4, 12): **“והחוט המשולש לא במהרה ינתק”—the three-ply cord will not be severed easily.** This is the implication of the passuk (Shemos 19, 20): **“יירד ה'—Hashem descended upon Har Sinai to the top of the mountain; Hashem summoned Moshe to the top of the mountain and Moshe ascended.** The three personifications of humility were united.

Who Were the Birds that Alighted at Moshe's Feet?

It is fitting for us to address the statement of Rabbi Yitzchak in the Zohar hakadosh cited above: **: He saw birds flying, taking off from there, and alighting at Moshe's feet. He immediately sensed what was transpiring; so, he left the flocks at the edge of the midbar, and he entered alone.** The Sifsei Kohen (Shemos), one of the young disciples of the Arizal in Tzfat, writes: **Perhaps the birds alighting at Moshe's feet were the neshamos of Yisrael who were destined to receive the Torah from him.**

Nevertheless, since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, we can propose a plausible interpretation based on that which is written (Koheles 10, 20): **“כי עוף השמים יוליך את הקול ובעל כנפים יגיד דבר”—for a bird of the skies may carry the sound, and some winged creature may betray the matter.** According to the Zohar hakadosh (Pekudei 241b), this refers to the malachim, who are called birds. Now, we have explained that the initial encounter between Moshe Rabeinu and HKB"H at Har Sinai was the revelation of the burning bush, which was a preparation for Matan Torah. At Matan Torah, the malachim attacked Moshe Rabeinu verbally, as we have learned in the Gemara (Shabbas 88b): **“בשעה שעלה משה למרום אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקב"ה, רבונו של—when Moshe ascended to the heights, the ministering angels said before HKB"H:**

“Master of the Universe! What is someone born of a woman doing amongst us?” In the end, however, the malachim conceded defeat to Moshe Rabeinu (ibid. 89a): **“מייד הודו לו להקב"ה, שנאמר ה' אדונינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ, ואילו—Immediately, they conceded to HKB"H, as it is said (Tehillim 8, 10): “Hashem, our Master, how grand is Your name throughout the land.” Now, it is not written: “Bestow Your glory upon the heavens.”**

We can now explain the matter of the birds flying above Har Sinai in this light. Since Har Sinai is a holy place, the malachim, who are referred to as birds, fly over and around it, in keeping with the words of the passuk: **“כי עוף השמים יוליך את הקול”.** But when Moshe Rabeinu arrived there: **He saw the birds flying, taking off from there, and landing at his feet,** because HKB"H orchestrated a symbolic gesture in anticipation of Matan Torah. Thus, when the ministering angels, symbolized by heavenly birds, would come to complain about Moshe's presence in the heavens to receive the Torah on behalf of Yisrael, they would ultimately fall down at his feet. They would also concede to Hashem: **“ה' אדונינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ”.**

The Loving Encounter between Moshe and Aharon at Har Sinai Foreshadowed Yisrael Receiving the Torah as a Single Body with One Heart

This raises an interesting question. According to the Zohar hakadosh, the elation of Moshe Rabeinu and Har Sinai was due to the fact that their union was arranged at the beginning of creation. Yet, Moshe Rabeinu initially refused to accept this mission assigned to him by HKB"H that would have resulted in their reunion. After all, the point of the exodus of Yisrael from Mitzrayim was for them to receive the Torah on Har Sinai.

Rashi's commentary on the passuk (Shemos 4, 10) provides us with an answer: **HKB"H spent a full seven days persuading Moshe at the “s'neh” (thornbush) to undertake His mission . . . All of his reluctance was because he did not want to assume superiority over Aharon, his brother; for, Aharon was both older than him and a navi, as it is stated (ibid. 14): “Is there not Aharon your brother, the levi?” Additionally, it was said to Eli HaKohen (Shmuel I 2, 27): “Did I not reveal Myself to your father's**

house in Mitzrayim?" This was a reference to Aharon. The source for this is a fascinating passage in the Midrash Tanchuma (Shemos 27) related to the passuk (ibid. 27):

"Hashem said to Aharon, 'Go meet Moshe in the midbar.'" This is the implication of the passuk (Shir HaShirim 8, 1): "O, that You were like a brother to me." (The Midrash is perplexed) Yisrael say to HKB"H, "O, that You were like a brother to me"; yet, you find that all brothers hate each other. Kayin hated Hevel . . . Yishmael hated Yitzchak . . . Eisav hated Yaakov . . . the shevatim hated Yosef . . . So, which brother is Yisrael speaking of to HKB"H? Like Moshe and Aharon, as it says (Tehillim 133, 1): "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together." For they loved and appreciated each other. When Moshe took the kingship and Aharon the priesthood, they did not hate each other; rather, they each rejoiced in the other's greatness (rise to power).

Know that when HKB"H instructed Moshe to go on his mission to Pharaoh, and he (Moshe) said to Him (Shemos 4, 13): "Send by the hand of whomever You will send"—you might have thought that Moshe was stalling, because he did not want to go. It is not so; rather, he was acting out of respect for Aharon. Moshe said: "Until I came onto the scene, Aharon, my brother, prophesied for them in Mitzrayim for eighty years" . . . Moshe said, "And now, I am intruding in my brother's territory, and he will be upset." Therefore, he did not want to go.

HKB"H said to Moshe: Aharon does not care about this (this does not bother him). Not only is he not upset, but he is very happy. Know that He said to him (ibid. 14): "Moreover, behold, he is going out to meet you and he will see you and he will rejoice in his heart." It does not say that he expressed happiness or was simply happy, but rather that his heart was happy. Rashbi said: The heart that rejoiced in his brother's greatness, should come and rejoice and wear the Urim V'Tumim, as it says (ibid. 28, 30): "Into the Choshen HaMishpat shall you place the Urim and the Tumim, and they shall be on Aharon's heart." After He (HKB"H) told

him this, he (Moshe) agreed to go (on the mission). Immediately, HKB"H revealed Himself unto Aharon and said to him (ibid. 27): "Go to meet Moshe." This is the meaning of (Shir HaShirim 8, 1): "O, that You were like a brother to me"—like Moshe and Aharon; "when I would find You outside, I would kiss You" indicates that he met him at the Mountain of G-d, and he kissed him.

Moshe and Aharon's Exemplary Brotherly Love Made Amends for the Brotherly Hatred that Resulted in the Galus in Mitzrayim

With great pleasure, we will explain in greater depth the refusal of Moshe Rabeinu, Yisrael's trustworthy shepherd, to accept the mission of the Omnipresent to take Yisrael out of Mitzrayim without his brother's assistance. Let us refer to a teaching in the Gemara (Shabbas 10a): "לעולם אל ישנה אדם בנו בין הבנים, שהרי בשביל משקל שני סלעים מילת שנתן יעקב ליוסף יותר משאר בניו נתקנאו בו אחיו, ונתגלגל הדבר שני סלעים מילת שנתן יעקב ליוסף יותר משאר בניו נתקנאו בו אחיו, ונתגלגל הדבר וירדו אבותינו למצרים." A person should never treat one son differently than his other sons; for on account of two selas weight of fine wool that Yaakov gave Yosef in excess of his other sons (the "Kestones passim," striped tunic), his brothers became jealous of him, and the matter evolved such that our forefathers descended to Mitzrayim.

Tosafos (ibid.) write that even though the galus was already decreed at the Bris bein HaBesarim (Bereishis 15, 13): "כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם ועבדום וענו אותם ארבע מאות שנה"—that your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. Yet, if not for the sin of "mechiras Yosef," they would not have been subjected to such extreme torture in Mitzrayim; they could have fulfilled the prophecy of galus in a strange land for four-hundred years without all the suffering and indignities. Accordingly, the redemption from Mitzrayim hinged on unity and brotherly love to make amends for the hatred among the brothers that led to the galus in Mitzrayim.

This explain magnificently a passage in the Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu Rabbah (24): "יוצאי מצרים מצוה אחת היתה בידן, ויוצאי מצרים מצוה אחת היתה להם, ומהי המצוה אחת שהיתה להם? שישבו בארץ אבותיהם, ומהי המצוה אחת שהיתה להם? שישבו בארץ אבותיהם." Those who left Mitzrayim had only one mitzvah; and it

was more pleasing to HKB"H than one hundred mitzvos. What was that one mitzvah they had? They all formed a single unit, and they made a covenant to perform "chesed" with one another. Thus, they rectified the defect of the brother's hatred that precipitated the galus in Mitzrayim.

We can now appreciate the profound wisdom of Moshe Rabeinu; he was willing to endanger his life by refusing HKB"H's mission to facilitate the exodus of Yisrael from Mitzrayim. He did not want to offend his brother, who had served as Hashem's navi in Mitzrayim for eighty years. Conversely, the Torah informs us of Aharon's deep love for his younger brother Moshe, when HKB"H responds to Moshe (Shemos 4, 14): "הלא אהרן אחיך הלוי ידעתי: **behold, he is going out to meet you and he will see you and he will rejoice in his heart.**" Rashi explains: **"He will see you, and he will rejoice in his heart"—it is not as you think, that he will resent you, because you are rising to greatness; on account of this, Aharon merited the ornament of the Choshen, which is placed over the heart.**

Moshe and Aharon Paved the Way for All of Yisrael to Receive the Torah at Har Sinai as a Unified Body of One Heart

Continuing on this sacred journey, we will elaborate further on Moshe Rabeinu's profound intent. Instead of embarking on the mission alone, he opted to join forces with Aharon. As it states (ibid. 27): "ויאמר ה' אל אהרן לך: **Hashem said to Aharon, "Goto meet Moshe, to the midbar."** So, he went and encountered him at the Mountain of G-d, and he kissed him. Targum Onkelos explains that he went and met him at the mountain on which the glory of Hashem was revealed.

Let us explain why HKB"H arranged for this display of brotherly love involving Moshe and Aharon to occur specifically at Har Sinai. When Bnei Yisrael were gathered at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, it says (ibid. 19, 2): "ויחן שם ישראל נגד ההר": **Yisrael encamped** (in the singular, as opposed to all the other encampments which are in the plural) **there opposite the mountain.** Rashi comments in the name of the Mechilta: **As**

one man with one heart. The implication is that a prerequisite for receiving the Torah was for Yisrael to be at peace with one another—"as one man with one heart." This is in keeping with the passuk (Tehillim 29, 11): "ה' עוז לעמו יתן ה' יברך את עמו בשלום"—**Hashem will give His nation strength; Hashem will bless His nation with shalom.**

Thus, we can propose that this is why HKB"H arranged for this encounter, characterized by sincere, brotherly love, to occur specifically at Har Sinai. As we have learned, Moshe initially turned down the mission out of respect and concern for his brother. Subsequently, Aharon agreed happily to serve as his younger brother's intermediary and interpreter. Thus, they embarked on the mission together and thereby paved the way for all of Yisrael to receive the Torah at Har Sinai with the same degree of unity and harmony, as indicated by the term "ויחן"—**as one man with one heart.**

Let us add a pleasant tidbit regarding the elucidation of the Mechilta: "ויחן שם ישראל נגד ההר, כאיש אחד בלב אחד." We can suggest that this alludes directly to Moshe and Aharon. We find the term "איש" referring to Moshe Rabeinu in several places. For instance: "והאיש משה עניו מאד"—**now the man, Moshe, was exceedingly humble.** Also (Devarim 33, 1): "וזאת הברכה אשר ברך משה איש האלקים את בני ישראל לפני מותו"—**and this is the berachah with which Moshe, the man of G-d, blessed Bnei Yisrael prior to his death.** Furthermore, the Torah attests (ibid. 34, 6): "ולא קם נביא עוד בישראל כמושה אשר ידעו ה' פנים אל פנים"—**never again has there arisen in Yisrael a navi like Moshe, whom Hashem had known face to face.** Clearly, the term "איש אחד" applies aptly to Moshe, who was a unique individual, the likes of whom has never been seen again. Also, the gematria of the words "כאי"ש אחד" (331+13=344) plus one (the "kolel") equals "מש"ה (345).

On the other hand, the words "בלב אחד" allude to Aharon HaKohen, Moshe's brother, of whom it says: **"He will see you, and he will rejoice in his heart."** We see that Aharon's loving heart extended not only to his brother but to all of Yisrael. When he passed away, it is written (Bamidbar 20, 29): "ויראו כל העדה כי גוע אהרן ויכבו את אהרן שלשים יום כל בית ישראל"—**the entire assembly witnessed that Aharon had perished; they wept for Aharon thirty days—the entire house of Yisrael.** Rashi comments: Everyone grieved over Aharon's death, both men and

women alike, since he was the ultimate peacemaker—he promoted shalom and amity among disputants, and between husbands and wives. This is consistent with Hillel’s advice in the Mishnah (Avos 1, 12): “הוי מתלמידיו של—**be among the disciples of Aharon—love peace and promote peace, love your fellow creatures and bring them closer to Torah.**

The Eighteen Berachos of Shemoneh Esrei Correspond to the Eighteen Times Moshe and Aharon Are Mentioned Together

I would now like to present to my esteemed readership a pearl of wisdom. Based on what we have discussed, we can better appreciate a teaching of Chazal in the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 2, 1) related to the passuk (ibid.): “וידבר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן לאמר. **Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon, saying.**” In eighteen places (in the Torah), you find Moshe and Aharon addressed as equals corresponding to the eighteen Berachos (the original Berachos of Shemoneh Esrei instituted by the Anshei Kenesses HaGedolah). The commentaries labor to explain what the connection is between Moshe and Aharon and the eighteen Berachos of Shemoneh Esrei.

Let us provide an explanation related to our current discussion based on what the Magen Avraham (O.C. 46) brings down in the name of the Arizal’s Sha’ar HaKavanos. Here are the sacred words of the Arizal:

Before one organizes his thoughts and prepares to pray in the Beis Kenesses . . . it is imperative that he accept upon himself the

mitzvah of (Vayikra 19, 18) “loving your fellow Jew as yourself.” And he should have in mind to love every Jew as himself.

The rationale for this can be understood based on what is taught in the Mishnah (Oktzin 3, 12): “לא מצא הקב”ה כלי מחזיק ברכה לישראל אלא השלום, שנאמר ה' עוז לעמו יתן ה' יברך את HKB”H did not find a vessel better suited for preserving berachah for Yisrael than shalom, as it states (Tehillim 29, 11): “Hashem will give His nation strength; Hashem will bless His nation with shalom.” Now, the essence of the prayer service is the tefilah of Shemoneh Esrei; it encompasses the abundant good of all the Berachos. Therefore, before praying, it is advisable to prepare a vessel capable of preserving shalom to hold all of the Berachos. Hence, it is necessary to accept upon ourselves the mitzvah of “ואהבת לרעך כמוך” at the start of davening. This is also why they instituted to conclude Shemoneh Esrei with the berachah of “שׁים שלום טובה וברכה”—**grant shalom, goodness, and berachah.** For, we have a fundamental principle that (Berachos 12a): “הכל הולך אחר—the conclusion—everything follows the conclusion.”

This enlightens us as to why Chazal, with their profound wisdom, instituted the eighteen Berachos of Shemoneh Esrei corresponding to the eighteen times Moshe and Aharon are mentioned together in the Torah. After all, they were the first brothers who loved each other with exceeding self-sacrifice. As explained, this paved the way for all of Yisrael to also fulfill the mitzvah of “ואהבת לרעך כמוך” to the utmost. In this manner, may we be privileged to establish a vessel capable of preserving and holding all of the Berachos that HKB”H bestows upon us with His infinite “rachamim” and goodwill!

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