

PARSHA WITH

Rabbi Shmuel Brazil



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תשפ"ה RAV BRAZIL PARSHAS BAMIDBAR – SHAVUOS

## THE SILENT THUNDER OF SEFIRAS HAOMER

There is an obvious connection between Pesach and Shavuos. The *tachlis* of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was to receive the Torah תעבדון אלקים על ההר הזה. The bridge that carried *Yisrael* from one point to the other is the days of *Sefirah*. The revelations *Am Yisrael* experienced on the night of the Seder was a gift from Hashem even though we were not deserving it. The days of the *Sefirah* was given as our *avodah* to earn it again, this time by ourselves. By doing so the revelation of the Seder Night was revealed once more even in a greater presentation than before, on the *Shavuos* the day of *Matan Torah*.

We would like to expound on another common association which all three share together and that is THUNDER. The *geulah* from *Mitzrayim* is described as a thunder רעם. In *Tehillim* 81 which is the *Shira* recited on Thursday the *passuk* says אענך בסתר רעם Hashem tells Moshe *Rabbeinu* I will answer your *tefillos* בסתר which were between Me and you concerning redeeming *Yisrael* from *Galus* in the fashion of רעם thunder with the explicit display of Ten *Maakos* on the Egyptians. Why are the plagues described as thunder? Chazal write *Berachos* 59

אמר רבי אלכסנדר אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי לא נבראו רעמים אלא לפשוט עקמומית שבלב שנאמר והאלהים עשה שיראו מלפניו

Thunder was created in order to remove the crookedness of one's heart. The heart can possess perverted *middos*, false understanding and *hashkafos*, and unhealthy emotions. Yet one can go through life as if he is sleeping and not aware of his shortcomings (Rambam *Hilchos Teshuvah* 3,4). The sudden boom of thunder is likened to the Shofar of Rosh Hashanah whose loud blasts shatter the silence in the entire shul proclaiming the call for *teshuvah*. A loud sudden thunder can shake a person for a moment or two to the point of shock therapy and even leave him with the momentary fear of death especially when unprepared for it. As they saying goes "there are no atheists in a foxhole". When the control of your life is out of your hands and there is a risk of losing it, then is the time we turn to Hashem. At that instance lies a valuable opportunity from Hashem for one to bring to his consciousness the necessity to become closer to Him and start straightening out some crookedness within his heart.

The beginning of *Am Yisrael's* journey was witnessing the *Ten Makkos* which was not only a call to the *Mitzriyim* to straighten their erroneous beliefs of idolatry, but it was also an awakening for *Yisrael* to be inspired to do the same. However, on the second day of Pesach this enlightenment and deep arousal to the recognition of the omnipotence of Hashem dimmed. For it was a gift of Hashem not due to our own merits, and was experienced by *Yisrael* in order for them to be redeemed from *galus* and begin yearning for the day of *Matan Torah*.

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At the end of the journey in becoming Hashem's special nation, we experienced a similar thunder at *Matan Torah*. The *passuk* says (Shmos 19,16) **ויהי קולות וברקים וקל שפר חזק מאד** (Shmos 19,16) **ויהי קולות וברקים וקל שפר חזק מאד**. *Some meforshim* learn that these sounds were *thunder*. There was also the ear piercing sound of the shofar which steadily increased in volume the loudness of which they never experienced. With both booming sounds going on, all the assembled trembled and were frozen in their places. They needed **Moshe Rabbeinu** to coax them to approach *Har Sinai* **ויוצא משה את העם לקראת האלקים**. One can be pretty sure that standing at *Har Sinai* in the presence of earsplitting sounds, any negative wrinkles in one's heart was ironed out and any *mechitza* were removed. As the *passuk* testifies when describing *Matan Torah* **עוד מלבדו אין הוא האלקים** (Devarim 4,35).

Now that we have demonstrated that the *Yetzias Mitzrayim* came after Ten thunderous plagues showing that Hashem is in charge of the world, and at *Matan Torah* once again it was displayed through thunder and other spectacular phenomenon that Hashem is King of the universe, let us examine the nature of the bridge between them, the Forty Nine Days of *Sefirah*. It was during this period that *Am Yisrael* prepared their hearts and their middos to resurrect an even greater revelation than the night of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

This challenge was achieved also through **רעם** - thunder, but unlike *Yetzias Mitzrayim* and *Matan Torah* it was by a **silent** thunder called by the name of *Sefiras Haomer*. *Yisrael's* yearning and anticipation for *Matan Torah* was so intense and deep, that each day that passed they would toil tirelessly to rectify another *middah* until they completed all forty nine *middos*. The *sefarim* tell us that the *Korban Omer* was to bring about a consciousness that nature is not **קרי** a happenstance but rather under the *hashgacha* of Hashem. That is why we find the *gematriah* of **עמר** to be **קרי**. The *Nefesh Habehamis* within man strives to take charge of the body and hijack it away from the *neschama's* control. It is driven to construct a **קיר** a wall and separation of **קרי** between the Yid and Hashem. In contrast is the *neschama's* goal to sanctify **קרי** nature, and thereby transform the letters **יקר** to **קרי** something that is precious and endearing to Hashem. For by elevating nature by fulfilling Hashem's intention of creation, one removes the **ריק** void and emptiness that would have resided in the world had not the physical been sanctified to a higher purpose. Instead of an actualization of **קדש**, one would have created a **חלול** which means hollowness and vacuum, losing forever that opportunity to reveal Hashem from His hiding place behind nature.

The second day of Pesach when we are commanded to bring the *Omer* we begin our journey to prepare ourselves for *Matan Torah* and the consciousness recognition of **עוד מלבדו אין**. We create our personal thunder within ourselves to correct each day the crookedness of our hearts. Each day of the **עמר** we realize that we are **נרם** naked from *maalos* after seeing the incredible revelations of Hashem during the night of the Seder that quickly vanished before our eyes. This void alone causes an arousal of our inner silent **רעם** thunder and serves as an alarm clock to wake up from our slumber and not fall back to "sleep" again.

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Another example of our Silent Thunder is our daily recital of שמע ישראל. When we say the שמע what are we supposed to be hearing? We suggest that we must bring ourselves to hear the climax of the cumulative thunder of *Maakos* at the night of the Seder, and the thunder of *Matan Torah*. These are hinted in the word שמע which is the acronym עשה שיראו (והאלקים) מלפניו that Hashem created thunder so we should be stirred to fix the crookedness of the heart and fear Him. The *passuk* hints to this idea is קול רעמך בגלגל (Tehillim 77,19). There were two revelations גלגל of your thunder, the word גל means revelation, in **Yetzias Mitzrayim and Matan Torah**. If one adds up two times the word רעם for these two occasions, he arrives at exactly 620 which is the same number of letters in the *Luchos*. The *Luchos* themselves symbolize the heart as the *passuk* says כתבם על לוח לבך. After we finished the *geulah* and the two Thunders, our hearts were ready to receive the *Luchos* and the Torah which included 613 *mitzvos* and 7 *takanos* instituted by our *Chachamim* altogether also 620. The *sefarim* say that the *passuk* of שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד alludes to *Matan Torah*. ה' אחד correlates to the first *dibbur* אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים, and ה' אחד correlates to the second *dibbur* לא יהיה לכם אלהים אחרים על פני. This tells us that when we recite the שמע we must sync ourselves with *Matan Torah* and hear the קול רעמך of Hashem that was at *Matan Torah*. An allusion to this thought is hinted in the inner letters of רעם which are מ ין ש the *gematria* of שמע 410.

The *Likutei Halachos* in *Hilchos Tefillin* 4,1 writes that *davening* with a loud קול causes thunder to be formed. According to this, when one recites the *Shma* with proper *kavanah* and with a loud voice, and takes upon himself עול מלכות שמים, he is actually forming in his heart the קולות of *Matan Torah* and the giving of the *Dibros* which were also with a big boom from Hashem. In this fashion, the saying of the *Shma* straightens out all the crookedness that one amasses in his heart over time.

Concerning the future *geulah* the *Navi* says והיה ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול. What does it mean a big shofar? I once saw a *pshat* that the big shofar is composed from all the culminative Rosh Hashanah's that we blew shofar to do *teshuvah* and bring *Moshiach*. We suggest that the incredible display of the *kol* shofar and the deafening thunder at *Matan Torah* were an actualization composite of all the inner silent thunders that millions of members of Klal Yisrael aroused within themselves during the 49 consecutive days of *Sefirah* in order to prepare and clean their hearts from its impurities and shortcomings. We can honestly say that during these 49 days they acquired the necessary לב טוב which is *gematria* 49 (Bnei Yissaschar).

Gut Shabbos Gut Yom Tov,

Rav Brazil