YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

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**Study Questions for Tikun Leil Shavuot**

On Shavuot night, the study of Torah takes on an added dimension, as we mark the anniversary of Matan Torah. This includes not only the minhag of learning throughout the night, but also HOW we learn. In other words, our learning should be more ACTIVE than passive. Towards this end, I have opted this week to write questions for self study, as opposed to a regular ('spoon fed') shiur in the hope that they will facilitate a more active manner of learning.

So, in case you are looking for a 'structured' learning program for Shavuot night, with or without a chavruta, I am sending out some 'preparation questions' which deal with Ma'amad Har Sinai and Shavuot.

chag samayach

menachem

BACKGROUND

In Chumash, we find several 'conflicting' accounts of the events which took place at Ma'amad Har Sinai. Considering that this is probably the most important event in our national history, it is important that we study the Torah's presentation of this event carefully.

The following is a list of "mkorot" (sources) in Chumash which deal with Ma'amad Har Sinai. I have also included several questions and pointers to various commentators which you should think about as you read.

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PART ONE/ MA'AMAD HAR SINAI IN CHUMASH IN SEFER SHMOT

I. AS A REASON YETZIAT MITZRAYIM

A. 3:7-12 (at the burning bush)

B. 5:1-3 (Moshe request to Pharoh)

C. 7:14-16 (the request before each plague)

D. 12:29-32 (Pharoh's reaction to makat bchorot)

E. 15:22-27 (What happened after 'three days')

F. 19:1-6 (The actual arrival at Har Sinai)

1. Bnei Yisrael request from Pharoh that he allow them to "worship their God on this mountain" ["taavdun Elokim b'Har hazeh"] (see 3:12 and 5:3). Does Pharoh ever answer this request?

2. If so, do Bnei Yisrael actually 'worship Him' at HarSinai? If so, when and where? [See Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Ramban, and Rashbam on 3:12!] [Read 12:29-32 carefully!]

II. SHMOT 19:1-20:18 - MA'AMAD HAR SINAI WHO WAS WHERE WHEN THE DIBROT WERE GIVEN? [or WHO HEARD WHAT?]

\* Begin by reading perek 19 and breaking it into four distinct sections. Try to give a title for each section (the sections as listed below).

[If you have time, follow Rashi, Ramban, Ibn Ezra and Chizkuni as you read each section.]

A. 1-8 / What proposition is being made? Should Bnei Yisrael say yes, how will it be fulfilled?

B. 9-15 / Why is this three-day preparation necessary?

\* Read Rashi on pasuk 9 carefully! What question is Rashi referring to?

Use the contradiction between psukim 9 and 11 to explain Rashi's shita. According to this shita, why is the three day preparation necessary?

\* "bim'shoch ha'yovel..." /pasuk 13 - Is the long blow of the shofar a sign that Matan Torah is over or about to begin? (relate to 19:19!)

C. 16-19 / the "hitgalut" (revelation)

\* Why were the people in the 'camp' (pasuk 16)?

\* Why did Moshe have to 'take them out' to Har Sinai? Would they have not come on their own?

\* "Moshe y'daber, v'ha'Elokim ya'anenu b'kol"

Who is Moshe speaking to: 1) the people; or 2) God? What did he say? See Rashi, Ibn Ezra, Ramban! [Did you ever notice this before?]

\* Where are Bnei Yisrael standing at this time? Relate to Dvarim 5:4-5!

D. 20-25 / "mitzvat hagbalah" - [limitation]

\* Note the use of "rosh ha'har" (the TOP of the mountain) in these psukim, as opposed to the use of only "Har Sinai" up until this point. What is the significance of this?

\* Relate this to the structure of the Mishkan - relate also to pasuk 24, see Rashi!

\* Why is this mitzvah: 'not to approach the mountain'- being repeated now? Does Moshe himself understand why? Read all five psukim, and then explain precisely what has changed (note 24)?

\* According to those commentators who explain that pasuk 19 included the dibrot (or at least some of them), when did psukim 20-25 take place?

\* Pasuk 25 - "va'yomer aleihem"- what did Moshe say when he came down? [The dibrot?] What did you think the first time you read this pasuk? Why?

E. The Dibrot : 20:1-14

\* Note the difference in 'person' between the first two dibrot and the last eight.

How does the Chizkuni explain the reason for this? Can there be any other explanation?

\* Do the "dibrot" contain TEN: 1) mitzvot; 2) statements; or 3) parshiot?

Explain each possibility. How do we know that there were TEN dibrot?

[After you answer, see Dvarim 4:11-13. In your opinion, does this relate to the name of Sefer Dvarim?)

\* If we divide these ten into two "luchot" (tablets), where should they be divided?

How does this relate to their content?

\* Are these ten mitzvot qualitatively different than the remaining mitzvot? If not, why are they special, or are they?

F. 20:15-18 / THE PEOPLE'S FEAR OF THE HITGALUT

A major controversy exists over when these four psukim took place. Ibn Ezra claims that this event took place AFTER Matan Torah, while Ramban claims that this took BEFORE Matan Torah.

Chizkuni explains that it happened DURING Matan Torah!

\* Read the parallel account in Dvarim 20:20-30, and explain the reason for this machloket. [See the mforshim inside!]

G. 20:19-23:33 The MITZVOT AND THE MISHPATIM

When, Where, and to Whom were these mitzvot given?

\* Why didn't the people hear them directly, like the dibrot? When did they hear them from Moshe? Why are specifically these mitzvot given at this time, as opposed to the remaining mitzvot which were given on to Moshe during his forty days on Har Sinai? Relate all your answers to 24:3-7!

\* Is all of Parshat Mishpatim - mishpatim? If not, which mitzvot are not?

\* How is 23:20-33 different than the mitzvoth which precede it? What do they constitute? Why?

H. 24:1-11 / The BRIT AT HAR SINAI

Another major controversy exists over when these events took place. Rashi, (and anyone else who claims that Bnei Yisrael proclaimed "na'aseh v'nishma" before Matan Torah), explains that this covenant took place BEFORE Matan Torah. Ramban claims that it took place AFTERWARDS.

\* According to each opinion, what is the meaning of "divrei Hashem" & "ha'mishpatim" in 24:3?

\* Accordingly, what is "sefer ha'brit" in 24:7?

\* Ramban's approach appears to be most logical, what causes Rashi to differ (relate to 19:7-8) and to the word "va'yavoh" there and in 24:3.

\* According to either opinion, what is the purpose of this covenental ceremony?

\* Explain Bnei Yisrael's statement of "na'aseh v'nishma" (according to Ramban's shita) based on 23:22 and the nature of this "brit" and the mitzvot which precede it. [Which word should Bnei Yisrael have said first? / (cute?)]

\* Why are certain leaders now permitted to 'see' God, while at Har Sinai they were warned against doing so (see 19:20-24)? What is the meaning of their ascent to Har Sinai to bow down before God, at the conclusion of this ceremony (relate to 24:1,9-11)?

I. 24:12-18 MOSHE'S ASCENT TO RECEIVE THE LUCHOT

Does MOSHE tell Bnei Yisrael how long he is going for? What does he tell them.

\* Who are the people to go to if a problem arises? Who did they go to? (What happened to Chur?)

\* Relate your answers, and the ceremony described in 24:4-6, to the events that take place at "chet ha'egel"!

**SEFER DVARIM**

A. 4:9-15 / NOT TO FORGET WHAT HAPPENED AT HAR SINAI

Read these psukim carefully, and in their context within the entire parsha 4:1-24.

\* Although this appears to be a mitzvah not to forget the events which took place at Har Sinai, this commandment is coming in the context of a more general prohibition against making an image to represent God. The main reason why the events of Har Sinai are mentioned is to remind Bnei Yisrael that they so no image of God at Ma'amad Har Sinai, and for that reason, they should not make any image of him in the future, even for good intentions! [Note 4:15.]

\* Explain why this warning is of special importance at this time, as Moshe is about to leave them as their leader. [What happened the last time they thought that he was gone?] Use your answer to explain the inclusion of 4:21-23 at the conclusion of this parsha.

B. 5:1-18 / THE DIBROT IN SEFER DVARIM

\* Psukim 5:1-5 comprise not only an introduction to the "dibrot" in Sefer Dvarim, but also an introduction to the main speech of Moshe Rabeinu. Explain why the "dibrot" begin this speech. Relate this to the concept of "brit" and 5:2-3 & 4:13.

\* Read 5:4-5 carefully. Is there a discrepancy between these two psukim?

\* What did happen at Matan Torah - did Hashem speak through Moshe and directly to the people?

Relate this to the machloket Ramban, Ibn Ezra, Chizkuni in Shmot perek 20:15.

\* According to 5:5, should (or could) have Bnei Yisrael been on Har Sinai at the time of Matan Torah?

Relate your answer to the two possible understandings of "bmshoch ha'yovel..." (Shmot 19:13) noted above!

\* 5:6-18 the DIBROT

In what way in the mitzvah of shabbat here different than in Shmot? Is it only "zachor v'shamor"? What is the respective REASON for shabbat in each? What other mitzvot in Chumash have both these aspects? (Relate this to the laws of "shmita".)

\* Why is the phrase "ka'asher tzivcha Hashem elokecha" used specifically in Sefer Dvarim and not in Shmot? (See 5:11,12,15,16.)

C. 5:19-28 / THE PEOPLE'S FEAR OF THE HITGALUT Compare this parsha to Shmot 20:15-18. What details are the same, what details are different? Are these two accounts describing the same event? If yes, why then are there so many discrepancies? If no, when did each take place? What is Ramban's conclusion in Shmot 10:15? [Read that Ramban carefully.]

\* In what way is God's reaction to Bnei Yisrael's fear in Dvarim different from Moshe's reaction to their fear in Shmot? Can you explain why?

\* Read 5:27-6:4 carefully. How are the events that took place at Har Sinai (5:20-27) related to Moshe Rabeinu's main speech in Sefer Dvarim (prakim 5->26)?

Use this to explain why this story begins his speech.

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EXTRA CREDIT

1. Had Bnei Yisrael not become fearful during Ma'amad Har Sinai, would there have been more than ten 'dibrot'?

In what manner would have the mitzvot in Parshat Mishpatim and/or Sefer Dvarim been given?

2. See the Rambam's explanation of Ma'amad Har Sinai in Moreh Nvuchim: Section II/ chapter 33! [See also the end of chapter 32 where he introduces chapter 33.]

Which "shita" (of the mforshim noted above) does Rambam follow? How does he relate the various midrashim of Chazal?

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PART TWO - SHAVUOT AND MATAN TORAH

1. Read carefully the following sources, which includes every instance when Shavuot is mentioned in the Torah:

A. Shmot 23:14-17 / 34:22-24;

B. Vayikra 23:15-21;

C. Bamidbar 28:26;

D. Dvarim 16:9-12.

In each of the above, what is the reason which the Torah gives for its celebration? What is the primary mitzvah which must be performed on Shavuot?

2. Is the fact that Shavuot commemorates Matan Torah ever mentioned in any of these sources? Why not?

3. Does Chumash ever mention precisely when Matan Torah took place? Read Shmot 19:1-2 carefully, see Rashi. What can we infer from Shmot 24:15-16?

4. Given that Yom Kippur marks the date on which Moshe came down with the second Luchot, and based on the description of the events of chet ha'egel is Dvarim 9:9-10:11 (note the mention of forty days in 9:9,18,25 & 10:10), can we determine a more precise date for Matan Torah?

5. Does the Torah tell us the precise date of when we left Egypt? Is that date commemorated? How many other specific mitzvot commemorate Yetziat Mitzrayim? How many specific mitzvot commemorate Matan Torah?

Why do you think the Torah never tells us the precise date of Matan Torah?

In other words, in what way is the event of Matan Torah different that Yetziat Mitzrayim? See Rashi Shmot 19:1!

6. In the Torah's presentation of the other two "shalosh r'galim", chag ha'matzot and chag ha'succot, we find mention of their historical significance (Shmot 13:3-7, Vayikra 23:43) as well as their agricultural perspective. In what way is Shavuot different? Had Bnei Yisrael been worthy and thus gone directly from Mitzrayim to Har Sinai, when would have Matan Torah taken place? Would Shavuot still have been celebrated? If so, when?

7. Where in Parshat Emor (Vayikra perek 23) do you think the historical aspect of Shavuot should have been mentioned? [Relate to 23:9-22, especially pasuk 22!] Does pasuk 22 belong where it is? Is there any similar pasuk anywhere else in Vayikra perek 23? Where does pasuk 22 belong (see Vayikra 19:9)? Now, read Vayikra 19:1-18, noting the use of the phrase "Ani Hashem", and the parallel between these mitzvot and the dibrot! Where is this 'shared pasuk' with Parshat Emor located? Could there be a hidden connection here to Matan Torah?

8. Note that in the special korban that comes with the "shtei ha'lechem" in Emor (23:17-19), a korban shlamim is included. This is the only time during the entire year when the "tzibur" offers a korban shlamim. Relate this to the special korban offered at Ma'amad Har Sinai (Shmot 24:4-6). Note that the only other instance when Bnei Yisrael offered a shlamim was during the dedication of the Mishkan "b'yom ha'Shmini" (see Vayikra 9:1-4). Try to explain the significance of this korban shlamim?

9. How does the dedication of the Mishkan relate to Matan Torah? (See shiur on Parshat Trumah- Tzaveh.) The other special korban brought on "Yom Ha'Shmini" (the seir l'chatat of the Am and "par chatat" of Aharon etc.) finds its parallel in the korban tzibur offered on Yom Kippur. Relate this to the connection between Matan Torah and Yom Kippur (the day Moshe descended Har Sinai with the second luchot!). Why do you think that these two aspects of the "yom ha'shmini" korban (the chatat and shlamim), continue in this manner on these two holidays (Yom Kippur and Shavuot)?

10. Another special law concerning the "shtei ha'lechem" is the fact that it is to be baked "chametz". How does this relate to chag ha'matzot, and the connection between chag ha'matzot and chag ha'shavuot. How do the special agricultural mitzvot of these two holidays relate to the nature of the historical events which they commemorate?

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That should keep you busy. Most of the points raised in the above questions have been dealt with in the Parsha shiurim over the last year, however, learning the sources on your own should enable you to arrive at a better appreciation of the "sugya".

chag Matan Torah samayach,

Menachem