

Parshat Behar 5779

In the beginning of this week's Parsha, the pasuk (Vayikra 25:1) states *"Hashem spoke to Moshe on the mountain of Sinai saying."* After this pasuk, the Torah explains the laws of Shemittah. Rashi asks, if all the mitzvos were given at Har Sinai, why does the Torah expressly state that the laws of Shemittah were given at Har Sinai? Rashi quotes a Medrash and explains that this pasuk teaches that not only were the main aspects of the mitzvos taught at Har Sinai but also all the details of the mitzvos as well. Rashi expands that just as the halachot of Shemittah were given to Bnei Yisrael years after the events at Har Sinai were taught to Moshe at Har Sinai; so too were all the other mitzvos and their details.

The Talmud Yerushalmi in Mesechet Chaggigah 10 explains that not only was Moshe taught all the mitzvos and all the halachic details at Har Sinai, but Moshe also knew every Torah discussion that would be held in the future such as a halachic discourse between a Rebbe and his students. How do we know this is the case? We see this from a pasuk in Koheles (1:10) *'Someone who says to his friend "Look, this one is new!" his friend says to him that this has occurred before'*. The Torah Temimah on this pasuk explains that there is nothing new in the world as everything was given to Moshe at Har Sinai. It seems from here that Moshe was given all the Written and Oral Torah at Har Sinai.

However, this seems to conflict with a gemarah in Mesechet Menachot (29:2) which brings down the following aggadah - *'When Moshe went up to Har Sinai, he found that Hashem was affixing crowns to the letters of the Torah. Moshe asked 'what are these crowns?' Hashem replied, 'In many generations there will be a man, Akiva, who will learn out many halakhot from each one of these crowns.'* Moshe asked to meet Rebbe Akiva. Hashem replied, *'Turn around!'* Moshe went and sat in the eighth row of Rabbi Akiva's class and listened to the lesson. Moshe didn't understand what was being said. He was very upset. But then they came to a certain subject matter and one of Rebbe Akiva's students asked *'From where did you learn this?'* and Rebbe Akiva replied, *'It is law given to Moshe at Sinai.'* After Moshe heard this he was calmed'.

Lets explore two questions on this gemorah. Firstly, how can it be that Moshe was taught all of Torah but he didn't know what Rabbi Akiva was saying in his class?

Secondly, why was Moshe calmed when he heard that the laws being taught, had come from 'Moshe at Sinai'?

To answer the first question, the Shulchan Oruch of the Arizal and the Or Hachaim say that Moshe did receive the entire Written and Oral Torah and he knew what would be taught in the future. However, there is a difference in how Moshe and rest of Bnei Yisrael received these laws. They explain that Moshe first received the Oral Torah directly from Hashem and then learnt the Written Torah. He knew what everything in the Oral Torah meant before he learnt the pasuk it was derived from. For example, Moshe was taught that *'an eye for an eye'* meant recompensing someone with money, before Moshe learnt the text. Unlike the Rabbis in the future, Moshe didn't need to derive the Oral from the Written law. Rebbe Akiva had to prove the Oral Torah from the Written Torah and therefore he had to know how to use the crowns to explain the Torah. Moshe never needed to analyse the text in this way.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe answers the second question. He starts by taking us back to the story of Nodov and Avihu who died after bringing a korban to Hashem. He explains that they died in such a way because they paskened Torah in front of Moshe. He suggests that before the Mishkan was built, everyone knew to rely on Moshe as their teacher of Torah. However, once the Mishkan had been built, people such as Nodov and Avihu thought that because they now had a place to connect to Hashem and they had learnt Torah, they didn't need Moshe anymore! However, even though they may have been great people and knew a great amount of Torah, they still needed to connect their learning to Moshe who received the Torah from Har Sinai. Now lets go back to Moshe in the classroom listening to Rabbi Akiva and hearing all his insights on the Torah. Moshe was concerned about where these ideas had come from. However, when Rebbe Akiva explains that his Torah came from Moshe at Har Sinai, Moshe felt better as he realised these ideas are connected to a source. It doesn't matter how insightful or original ones ideas maybe, they are worth nothing if they don't connect to Har Sinai. Nodov and Avihu were great men but they didn't respect the transmission of Torah from Moshe. This idea connects us to the upcoming festival of Shavuot which celebrates the giving of the Written and Oral Torah.