

The Weekly Daf



by Rav Mendel Weinbach - Dean, Ohr Somayach Institutions

Shabbos 86-92

Week of 27 Shevat-3 Adar 5758 / 23 February-1 March 1998
Rav Weinbach's insights, explanations and comments for the 7 pages of Talmud
studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle

Impulsive or Trusting?

So engrossed was he in his study of Torah that the Sage Rava was completely oblivious to the fact that he was sitting on the fingers of his hand and causing blood to rush to the surface. A heathen observer exploited this opportunity to taunt the Sage.

"Impulsive people that you are!" he laughed. "You were impulsive when you put your mouths before your ears (when you declared at Sinai "we shall do" before you said "we shall hear"), and you are impulsive now in your self neglect. You first should have determined whether the Torah you were being offered did not demand more of you than is possible and only then accept it."

Rava well understood that the heathen was interpreting his seemingly superhuman concentration on Torah study as evidence that the Jewish People had bitten off more than they can chew in accepting the Torah which had been rejected by all the less impulsive nations as being too difficult a challenge. His response was to explain the difference between the non-Jewish attitude of suspicion toward Hashem's offer of the Torah and the Jewish attitude of total trust. This is how Rashi so eloquently translates the reply of Rava:

"We related to Hashem with total trust in the manner of those who act out of love and we relied upon Him that He would not impose upon us any responsibility which we were not capable of fulfilling."

Whether it was in accepting a Torah sight-unseen or studying that Torah with such intensity as to be oblivious to physical pain, Jews were not guilty of being impulsive. They were rather the bearers of confidence that the Creator who offers a challenge also provides the power to meet it.

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What's in a Name — Sinai?

When Rabbi Kahana was asked for an explanation of "Sinai," the name of the mountain on which Hashem revealed Himself to the Jewish People and gave them the Torah he offered several suggestions which were rejected as falling short of the mark.

Scrambling the letters would give us "*Nisai*," a reference to the miracles that took place at the time of the Sinai revelation. But then why scramble the letters instead of just writing them in their intended fashion?

Perhaps "Sinai" approximates "*Simnai*" and is a reference to the "sign of good fortune" which was given to Jewry on that mountain. But then why omit the "m" sound in the name of the mountain?

Rabbi Kahana's challenger finally revealed his own explanation which he had heard from leading Sages.

"Sinai" sounds almost exactly like "*Sinah*" which means hatred. The name of the mountain communicates the fact that this is where "hatred descended to the nations of the world."

Rashi explains this as a reference to Hashem's attitude to all the nations who rejected the Torah He had offered them. Another approach has been offered by one of the Torah giants of the previous generation who was martyred in the Holocaust, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, *zatza*l:

"*Sinai*" and "*Sinah*" are two sides of the same coin. Once Jews accepted the responsibility of being a "holy nation" through acceptance of the Torah, there is no longer an option of copping out and being like all the other nations. It is our choice to preserve our uniqueness through the pleasant ways of "Sinai" Torah observance. Should we seek to assimilate and abdicate, Hashem made sure that "hatred descended to the nations" — that anti-semitism would serve as a reminder that we are a people apart with a special destiny.

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