

## And when the Ark would journey. (10:35)

*Va'yehi binsoa haAron* are the first three words of the shortest *sefer* in the Torah. In the *Talmud Shabbos* 115b, *Chazal* teach, Hashem placed markings (inverted *nuns*) immediately preceding and following this section to enclose it and separate it from the rest of the Torah. This was done to teach that this is not its proper place. (These *pesukim* belong earlier in *Perek 2* of *Sefer Bamidbar* where the Torah describes how each tribe camped under its banner.) Rabbi (Yehudah *HaNasi*) says, "It is not for this reason that the signs (inverted *nuns*) appear, but rather, because this section ranks as a significant Book unto itself."

The *Parsha*/Book of *Va'yehi binsoa* contains eighty-five letters. The number of letters has *halachic* significance: If within a Torah scroll that has become worn, there is sufficient writing to gather (whole words) which number eighty-five letters that are still intact, we may save it from a fire of *Shabbos*. If not, we may not save it.

*Chazal* quote the *pasuk* in *Mishlei* 9:1, *ChaTzvah amudehah shivah*, "(Wisdom has built her house.) She has hewn out her seven pillars", these represent the seven Books of the Torah. Following *Rashi's* commentary, we now have: *Bereishis*; *Shemos*; *Vayikra*, *Bamidbar* – until *Va'yehi binsoa*; *Va'yehi binsoa*; *Bamidbar* following *Va'yehi binsoa*; *Devarim*.

Having said the above, we come to the question that begs elucidation: The entire Torah is made up of *Sefarim*, Books, which are so much larger than this small *parsha*. How could a *Sefer* comprised of a mere eighty-five letters have equal standing with the others? In his *Shevilei Pinchas*, **Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita**, cites the **Chida** in his *Nachal Kedumim*, who quotes the *Sefer Kaf V'Naki* in its *k'sav yad*, original manuscript, that presents us with an incredible explanation. "The *Shaar Nun*, fiftieth gate, was hidden from Moshe *Rabbeinu*; therefore, two inverted *nuns* immediately precede and follow *Va'yehi binsoa*, to allude to the *nun/fifty Shaarei Binah*, Gates of Understanding. *Sefer Va'yehi binsoa* is (thus) equivalent to the entire Torah, and all he (Moshe) merited from it were eighty-five letters."

Obviously, much more of this commentary is couched in esoteric profundity. We will attempt to explain and take for ourselves bits and pieces which will illuminate a number of issues concerning the actual size of the Torah. In his *Sefer Midbar Kedaimos*, the *Chida* applies the novel idea expressed by the *Kaf v'Naki* to explain a lingering question based upon a well-known statement by the *Zohar HaChadash*. The *Zohar* writes that the Torah is comprised of 600,000 letters. The *Megaleh Amukos* adds that, just as there are 600,000 letters in the Torah, so, too, there are 600,000 souls, each one coinciding with its individual letter in the Torah. This is alluded by the name Yisrael, whose letters are an abbreviation for *Yeish shishim ribo osios la'Torah*, "There are sixty myriads (10,000) letters in the Torah."

Anyone who can count the letters will note, as the commentators did, that there are actually 304,805 letters in the Torah. What happened to the rest? There are a number of explanations:

most notable is that of the **Pnei Yehoshua** in his commentary to the *Talmud Kiddushin* 30a. He wrote that, while the *Torah she'B'Ksav*, Written Law, has only half of the 600,000 letters, we include the *Targum*, Aramaic translation, which was also transmitted to Moshe at *Har Sinai*.

We now return to our original question, concerning how a book of such miniscule size could parallel the significance of the other *Chumashim*. In the *Talmud Rosh Hashanah* 21b, *Chazal* make the following statement: “*Chamishim Shaarei Binah nivreu b’olam*, Fifty Gates of Understanding were created in the world (these gates represent the various reasons for each law in the Torah). *V’Kulan nitnu l’Moshe chaseir echad*, “and all but one were given to Moshe,” as it is written *vaTechasreihu me’at meiElokim*, “But You have made him only slightly wanting in (understanding) Divinity”. *Maharal* says that this “one” refers to the understanding of G-d’s very essence.

The **Shlah HaKadosh** quotes the *Arizal* who says that when Moshe ascended *Har Sinai* to accept the Torah, he actually received the Fiftieth level of Understanding. After the Jewish People sinned with the Golden Calf, it was taken from him. This is alluded to by Hashem’s statement to Moshe following the sin, *Lech Reid ki shicheis amcha*, “Go down, for your nation has become corrupt.” The *gimatria*, numeral equivalent, of *lech* is fifty, coinciding with the fifty Gates of Understanding. Hashem told Moshe, “Go down from your Fiftieth level of Understanding – because your nation has become corrupt.”

We are being taught by the *Kaf v’Naki* that during *Mattan Torah*, the Giving of the Torah, *Parashas Vayehi binsoa* was indeed a very large *sefer*. It was as large as the rest of the Torah. Because it was a component of the Fiftieth level of Understanding, however, it was hidden as a result of the sin of the Golden Calf. All that was left were eighty-five letters.

We now understand the hidden message of the inverted *nuns*. The *nun* was above the other letters, to teach us that what we have before us is what is left of Moshe’s exposure to the fiftieth gate of understanding. It is inverted as if to indicate that the rest of the *parsha* sort of “turned” its back on us. We now posit that the *Chazal* which teaches that the Torah contains six hundred thousand letters is referring to the entire Torah, including the original unabridged Book of *Vayehi binsoa*. After the sin of the Golden Calf, it was reduced to a mere eighty-five letters.