

"And Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai." (1:1)

One of the words at the start of this *parsha* - "*Bamidbar*" (in the wilderness) - serves as the name of both the *parsha* and the fourth of the five *Chumashim*. Much of the *Torah's* narrative takes place in the wilderness, and there *Klal Yisroel* received the *Torah*. Indeed, *Chazal* see an integral connection between the wilderness and the *Torah*. It is appropriate that this *parsha* is traditionally read on the *Shabbos* preceding the *Yom Tov* of *Shavuot*. We will therefore, state some of the approaches necessary for the proper and successful study of *Torah*.

The *Midrash* states that the *Torah* was given in three distinct settings: fire, (Mount Sinai was fiery and smoking), water, (the heavens and the clouds were simultaneously dripping with water), and desert. The *Midrash* explains that just as fire, water, and desert are free and available to all, so too, the *Torah* is free and available to all. The *Shem Me'shmuel* suggests that these three entities symbolize three specific qualities necessary for successful *Torah* study and personal development. Fire signifies the burning desire and fiery enthusiasm which exists in the heart of a Jew who yearns for Hashem. Water suggests coolness and patience, a settled and disciplined mind, and the clarity of thought necessary to properly formulate an understanding of *Torah* concepts. The desert implies man's ability to forego worldly pleasures and luxuries which hinder him from achieving total perfection.

The *Nachlas Eliezer's* approach to the significance of these entities is somewhat different. The *Torah* contains within it positive commandments and negative commandments. The differences between these mitzvos mandate two distinct approaches for their fulfillment. Positive mitzvos require the "fire" of enthusiasm and zeal, while the negative mitzvos demand a cool restraint. These two contrasting qualities are symbolized by the fire and water mentioned by the *Midrash*. However, there is a danger, even to one who possesses these qualities - the ability to clearly understand the appropriate time and place to utilize these qualities. The "evil inclination" and personal prejudices of an individual can easily blind his perspective to the point that he loses the ability to distinguish which approach is indicated. Therefore, the *Torah* mandates a third quality. A Jew must make himself desertlike, free of foreign elements and prejudices. He must banish these personal feelings so that he is able to see the truth of the *Torah* and live justly by its ideals.

The *Pri Tzaddik* declares that only after a man rids himself of the notion that in the pursuit of worldly pleasures and desires will he find happiness and peace, is he able to attain true harmony in the performance of *Torah* and mitzvos. For only then can man truly become unified with his fellow man and his Creator. *Rabbi Chaim Mordechai Katz Zt"l* notes, that although it is definitely permissible to acquire worldly possessions and maintain them, one should never view their possession as an essential prerequisite for his lifestyle, since this will hinder his proper acquisition of *Torah*. We conclude that one can only become a true *Torah* Jew by clearly determining his life's priorities and not live a life filled with unessential luxuries and desires.