

## **Come, let us outsmart it lest it become numerous. (1:10)**

Pharaoh no longer remembered how Yosef had brilliantly led the nation through a major economic crisis. He looked around and saw that the immigrant family of seventy Jews that had originally come from Canaan had now become a nation of thousands, growing exponentially. They had become too numerous and too strong. Something had to be done about them. He foolishly thought that he could contend with Hashem and control the destiny of *Klal Yisrael*. He was clearly wrong.

When our nation received the Torah at *Har Sinai*, the Torah records the event. *Va'yehi kol ha'shofar holeich v'chazeik me'od*, "The sound of the *shofar* grew continually much stronger" (*Shemos* 19:19). In his commentary, *Harcheiv Davar*, the *Netziv*, *zl*, derives a powerful and critical lesson which serves as a beacon for understanding the inordinate power of *Torah She'Ba'al Peh*, the Oral Law/*Mishnah* and *Talmud*. He writes: "The sound of the *shofar* grew continually much stronger. The sound of the *shofar* at Sinai was different than the ordinary sound of the *shofar*, which becomes weaker as the sound continues. (It starts off strong and diminishes.) The sound of the *shofar* (at Sinai) was strong initially, and its sound became stronger as it continued. This was to teach *Am Yisrael* that the sound of *Torah She'Ba'al Peh* will become stronger and more pronounced with time. This sound emerged from the dark, awesome smoke (that encompassed the mountain). This alludes (a portent for the future) to the idea that smoke is a metaphor for darkness, adversity, troubles, in which a person does not see his way out. He has no idea what will happen. So, too, will the sound (commensurately) become stronger (as occurred during the period of *Bayis Rishon*, the First *Bais Hamikdash*). It was only when Yoshiyahu *Hamelech* saw the bitter *galus*, exile, did he turn to the *Leviim*, the tribe most identified with Torah study, to raise the banner of *Torah She'Ba'al Peh*. This pattern has continued throughout our exile, whereby the greater the adversity that we encounter, the greater the response of *Torah She'Ba'al Peh*."

*Horav Chizkiyahu Mishkovsky*, *Shlita*, observes that the farther (in time) that we move away from *Har Sinai*, the stronger and more proficient the sound of the *shofar*/Torah study. We have only to look around at the multitude of *sefarim*, volumes of analytical commentary on the *Talmud* and *halachah*, that have emerged in the last few decades. The *Netziv* teaches us, *V'kaasher yaanu oso, kein yirbeh v'kein yifrotz*; "But as much as they would afflict it, so it would increase and so it would spread out" (*Ibid.* 1:12). The more that is piled on us, the greater the challenge and adversity, the greater is our response with Torah.

The *Talmud Bavli*, Babylonian *Talmud*, which is the staple upon which *halachah* is based, was redacted when the Romans issued vicious decrees against us. The *Talmud Yerushalmi*, on the other hand, was not compiled during a period of misfortune. Thus, it is not studied as much.

The author of the *Shaagas Aryeh*, *Horav Aryeh Leib Gunzberg*, *zl*, also authored two other volumes of commentary: *Turei Even* and *Gevuros Arye*. Noticeably, the second two volumes did not achieve as much reader attention as his magnum opus, *Shaagas Aryeh*, which is a staple in the *yeshivah* world. *Horav Chaim Brisker*, *zl*, attributed this phenomenon to the fact that the author

wrote the *Shaagas Aryeh* while he was suffering from abject poverty, when he could not even afford paper, so that he wrote on the walls of his decrepit house. He wrote the other two *sefarim* when he was the distinguished *Rav* of Metz, with a decent salary and a home which was suited for an individual of such prominence. The more arduous the adversity, the more robust the response.