

**RAV MOSHE
STERNBUCH
ON CHUMASH**

===== Bamidbar =====

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For Questions and Comments

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Michtav Berachah

I was very gratified to hear of the forthcoming publication of an English collection of *divrei Torah* and *aggadah* that I have said on the parshah, including those I merited to hear from my *rabbeim*, the *gedolei hador* of the previous generation.

This work is especially fitting for our generation, which is beset by confusion and spiritual weakness. Studying the parshah strengthens one's faith and teaches him to perceive the Hand of Hashem in all events. I trust that this sefer will bring encouragement to many, inspiring them to greater *emunah* and *yiras Shamayim*.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my grandson Rav Pinchas Yehuda Sternbuch *shlita*. Aside from investing his heart and soul for the success of the yeshiva and the bachurim, he also has expended much effort to ensure the success of this sefer. I also thank Rav Shimon Szimonowitz *shlita* and his staff at Machon Aleh Zayis for their efforts in preparing and publishing this work, and for their worthy undertaking to disseminate Torah in Klal Yisrael. I also wish to express my appreciation to my dear friend Rav Reuven Schron *shlita* and to the other donors who generously undertook to cover the publishing expenses for this work. May the merit of the Torah stand by them and their families, and may Hashem grant them all good, materially and spiritually. *Etz chaim hi lamachazikim bah, v'somcheha me'ushar*.

I thank Hashem, Who in His great kindness has granted me the privilege throughout my life to study and teach Torah, and to witness the growth of the yeshivah that I was *zocheh* to establish, where *bnei Torah* toil in Torah and refine their *middos*. I also wish to express my appreciation to my son, Rav Ephraim Zalman *shlit"a*, who devotes himself wholeheartedly to the talmidim, guiding them to attain higher levels in Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, and *middos tovos*.

May Hashem, in His mercy, continue to grant me strength to teach His Torah and to publish additional sefarim for the benefit of Klal Yisrael. May the Torah never depart from my mouth, nor from the mouths of my children and descendants, and may we merit soon the complete redemption, when we shall see the glory of Hashem revealed in the world.

ב'תשנ"ח

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Introduction

With heartfelt gratitude to Hashem, we express our thanks for the great kindness He has shown us in allowing us to publish this sefer, Rav Moshe Sternbuch on Chumash, a work that brings the Torah wisdom of *Maran Posek Hador*, Rav Moshe Sternbuch *shlita* to the *tzibbur* at large.

The teachings collected here are drawn primarily from the Rav's many years of delivering *shmuessen* on the weekly *parshah* in his *Beis Medrash*, Merkaz HaTorah, in Johannesburg, South Africa, and later in his *Beis Medrash HaGra* in the Har Nof neighborhood of Yerushalayim, and in the *Yeshivah Gedolah* under his leadership in Beit Shemesh. Additionally, halachic discussions were selected from Rav Moshe's many halachic works and inserted in the relevant *parshiyos*. These *divrei Torah* were published and widely distributed each week in tens of thousands of copies throughout Eretz Yisrael and abroad, and were eventually collected and published in Hebrew in the *Biurim V'Hanhagos al HaTorah* and *Vayaged Moshe* series.

In these talks, Rav Moshe Sternbuch presents incisive halachic analysis and profound insights into the *pesukim* and words of *Chazal*, along with guidance in *avodas Hashem* and practical lessons for navigating the challenges of our generation. His words often draw upon the wisdom of the great Torah giants of earlier generations with whom he merited a close connection.

In recent years, many have requested that these teachings be made

available in English as well. Rav Shimon Szimonowitz and the team at Machon Aleh Zayis have undertaken this project, with the hope that it will bring the Rav's timeless guidance to an even wider audience.

Included alongside the collected teachings are relevant stories told by Rav Moshe of the *gedolim* he merited a connection with, including Rav Elchonon Wasserman, Chazon Ish, the Brisker Rav, the Tchebiner Rav, his *rebbe* Rav Moshe Schneider *zt"l* and many others. Additionally, relevant stories told by Rav Moshe's *talmidim* about Rav Moshe himself were selected from the Hebrew books *Gadol B'kirbech* and *Me'onos Arayos* to add context and give readers a glimpse of the greatness of the author, thereby enhancing their ability to properly appreciate and absorb, Rav Moshe's elevated words.

We conclude with a heartfelt *tefillah* that Hashem grant Rav Moshe *shlita* many more years of strength and tranquility, so that we may continue to learn from the wellsprings of his Torah and wisdom. Just as we have merited to bring this volume to completion, may we be privileged to continue publishing more of his teachings for the benefit of Klal Yisrael.

Bamidbar

Torah in the Wilderness

וידבר ה' אל משה במדבר סיני.

Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai (Bamidbar 1:1).

Why does the *pasuk* mention that the Torah was given in the wilderness?

This alludes to the connection between *Matan Torah* and the desert, which can be explained in numerous ways:

Available for Others

The Midrash explains (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 1:7), *Anyone who does not make himself like an ownerless wilderness cannot acquire wisdom and Torah.*

Rather than devoting all available time to his own learning, one should make himself available to teach anyone who wishes to learn. This will not impede his personal growth, but will actually advance it.

Trust

The desert, devoid of any source of food and water, symbolizes trust in Hashem. Anyone who attempts to cross it must firmly believe that Hashem will provide for him, even where no natural means of survival exist.

Similarly, one who wishes to succeed in Torah must recognize that he cannot rely on his own natural abilities to arrive at a true understanding

of Torah, but must trust in Hashem to assist him in reaching the proper conclusions. As the Vilna Gaon writes (*Even Shlomo* 3:1), *Torah cannot endure in someone who lacks bitachon.*

Just Passing Through

Anyone who is in the desert is merely passing through on his journey to his destination, not residing there permanently.

To accept the yoke of Torah, Bnei Yisrael needed to recognize that this world is likewise no more than a desert, a temporary stop along the journey to their final destination.

Under Any Circumstances

The desert is a brutal place to be; its harsh conditions make any journey extremely difficult.

To truly accept the Torah, Bnei Yisrael needed to commit to observing the mitzvos even in the most difficult circumstances.

Torah Without Borders

The desert is an unimportant place, far from the large cities and centers of civilization. The Torah was given in the desert to teach that Torah is not bound to any specific place, and can be found even in the most far-flung and insignificant places in the world.

Torah in Every Era

Throughout history, various groups have portrayed Torah observance as an obligation that depends on Klal Yisrael's circumstances. The *maskilim* claimed that the Torah was meant to be observed only when Klal Yisrael lives in Eretz Yisrael, where Hashem's presence rests. The early Zionists argued the opposite, maintaining that the Torah served only to preserve our identity while we lived in exile among the nations, but is no longer necessary once we reside alone in our own land.

The Torah was given in the desert to disprove these two claims. Klal Yisrael was not in Eretz Yisrael at the time, nor in exile amongst the nations, but they nevertheless accepted the Torah and its mitzvos.

In Isolation

The desert is a place of seclusion where one can live removed from society. To succeed in Torah and *avodas Hashem*, one must separate himself from society and focus solely on his own inner world. He must hold himself accountable to his own expectations of himself and not assume that it is sufficient to meet the expectations of the surrounding society.



Rav Chaim's Seclusion

Rav Avraham Kalmanovitz related that he once visited Rav Chaim Brisker in his home and found him sitting alone in a darkened room. He explained that the Rambam (*De'os* 6:1) writes:

If he is in a country whose customs are evil and whose people do not go in the straight path, he should go to a place whose people are righteous and conduct themselves in a good way. If all the countries he knows of and hears about conduct themselves in a no-good manner, like in our times, or he cannot go to another country whose conduct is good because of the bandits on the road, or due to illness, he should sit alone as it says, "He should sit alone and be silent." If they are evil sinners who do not allow him to remain in the country unless he mingles with them and conducts himself in their evil ways, he should go out to the caves and the deserts.

Rav Chaim explained that from time to time he secludes himself in his home, imagining himself alone in a desert, and makes an accounting of his mitzvah observance and *avodas Hashem*, contemplating whether he is using his life to the fullest, or wasting it in pursuit of worldly pleasures.

