

# Toldot Shimshon

by Rabbi Shimshon Chaim Nachmani zt"l

Published Livorno 1776\*

## Chapter I – Mishnah 1

מִשָּׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי, וּמִסִּרְהָ לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְיִהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים, וְזִקְנִים לְנָבִיאִים, וְנָבִיאִים מִסִּרְהָ לְאַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָה. הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים, הָיוּ מְתוּנִים בְּדִין, וְהִעֲמִידוּ מִלְמִידֵי הַרְבֵּה, וַעֲשׂוּ סִיג לַתּוֹרָה.

**Moses received the Torah from Sinai, and transmitted it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be patient in [the administration of] justice, raise many disciples and make a fence around the Torah.**

-----

יָד הַשַּׁעַר וְדָרָךְ הַקְּדִים, בְּבֹאֵנוּ אֶל־מִקְדָּשֵׁי־אֵל, לְהִבִּין וּלְדַקֵּק מֵאֵי שָׁנָא דְבְּמִשָּׁה נִקַּט לְשׁוֹן "קִבֵּל", וְאַחַר כֵּן לְשׁוֹן מִסִּרְהָ וּמִסִּרְהָ לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְאַחַר כֵּן חֲזַר לִזְמַן לְשׁוֹן "קִבֵּל", אֲנִיטִיגְנוֹס קִבֵּל מִשְׁמַעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק וְכוּ'.

Question 1: As we stand, **“at the gate,”** facing **“eastward,”**<sup>1</sup> **“as we enter G-d’s sanctuary,”**<sup>2</sup> we need to understand and to investigate what is taught by the use for Moses of the language **“received,”** and afterward the language of transmission, i.e., **“and transmitted it to Joshua,”** and afterward, in Mishnah 3, a return to the language of **“received,”** i.e., **“Antigonus, a man of Socho, received [the oral tradition] from Shimon the Righteous,”** etc.

וְעוֹד, מֵהוּ "מִסִּינַי", וְכִי הִקָּרַע נֶתַן לוֹ הַתּוֹרָה. וְאַף בְּמֵה שֶׁפִּירֵשׁ הַרְבֵּי עוֹבְדֵי מִבְּרִטְנֹרָא, מִמֵּי שְׁנַגְלָה בְּסִינַי, לְמַה הִזְכִּיר שָׁם "סִינַי". הִנֵּה לוֹ לִזְמַן, "מִשָּׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִהַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא".

Question 2: **Further, what is the meaning of this term, “from Sinai,” for did the mountain give [Moses] the Torah!? Even with how Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura<sup>3</sup> explained this, “from He who was revealed at Sinai,” why did [the Tanna of our Mishnah] mention “Sinai” there? He should have said, “Moses received the Torah from the Holy One, Blessed be He.”**

---

\* English translation: Copyright © 2022 by Charles S. Stein.

<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew original, the initial letters of the first four words are printed in bold, and spell the Tetragrammaton, the four-lettered name of G-d. The first two words, “at the gate,” appear in I Sam. 4:18 and II Sam. 18:4. The last two words, “eastward,” appear nine times in Ezek., in chapters 40, 42, and 43.

<sup>2</sup> This is an alteration of Ps. 73:17, **“until I entered G-d’s sanctuary** and reflected on their fate.”

<sup>3</sup> The first edition of *Toldot Shimshon* included the Hebrew commentary of Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura (c. 1445–c. 1515), Italian rabbi. This has not been included in the current translation.

ועוד, מה ראו אנשי כנסת הגדולה לומר שלוש דברים אלו, ולמה נוקא אלו השלושה דברים. ומהו החידוש שחידשו לנו עם "היו מתונים בדין", והלא כבר למדנו זה מ"אשרו חמוץ", אשרו המחמיץ את הדיו, בפרק [ד']<sup>4</sup> דסנהדרין דף ל"ה. והכי נמי השלחן ערוך חזן משפט סימן י' נקט לשון זה, צריך הדיו וכו', עד שניחמיצו וכו', ומה הוסיפו לנו במוסר זה.

Question 3: **Further, what did the Men of the Great Assembly see that motivated them to say these three things, and why did they specifically say these three things?**

Question 4: **What is the novelty that was created for us with the teaching, “Be patient in [the administration of] justice”? For hadn’t we already learned this from “relieve [ashru] the oppressed [chamotz],”<sup>5</sup> which was interpreted by Rava in the fourth chapter of Sanhedrin, page 35a as “praise [ashru] the judge who delays [mechametz] his verdict [before he pronounces it]”? Also, in the Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat, siman 10 (se’if 1), it uses this language, “The judge must be patient in the [administration of] justice, that he should not give a decision until he protracts [his deliberations]<sup>6</sup> and discussed it [the law] and it becomes clear to him as the sun.” So in light of the Torah’s injunction to “relieve the oppressed,” what is added for us by this ethical teaching of the Men of the Great Assembly?**

ועוד, שקהנה לו לומר, והעמידו תלמידים רבים, ומהו "הרבה". ועוד, "נעשו סניג לתורה", וכי סניג אהד יש לעשות לתורה, והלא בכל מצנה צריך סניג וגדר, והנה לו לומר "סניגים". ועוד, איך יקושרו עניינים הללו זה עם זה.

Question 5: **Further, [the Tanna] should have said, “raise many disciples” using the word *rabim* [רבים], what is the reason that they instead used this word *harbei* [הרבה]? Both words are based on the root רב, *rav*, and can be translated as “many” or “much.” In English, there are strict grammatical rules governing the use of the determinatives “many” and “much,”<sup>7</sup> but Hebrew is not as strict with regard to *rabim* and *harbei*. Thus, a plural noun can be followed by *rabim*; this appeared very commonly in Scripture.<sup>8</sup> A plural noun can alternatively be followed by *harbei*, as in our example; this also appeared in Scripture, though not as commonly.<sup>9,10</sup> While all are considered grammatically correct, it was more common to see a plural noun followed by *rabim* than by *harbei*.<sup>11</sup> What point was the Tanna making by using the less common approach?**

<sup>4</sup> The first edition incorrectly read “chapter 5.”

<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 1:17.

<sup>6</sup> In his annotated edition of the Shulchan Aruch (Montreal 1955), Rabbi Chaim N. Denburg states that the Shulchan Aruch’s source is Sanhedrin 35a’s interpretation of Isaiah 1:17. Thus, the citation of the Shulchan Aruch here may not provide any additional support beyond that of Sanhedrin 35a.

<sup>7</sup> “Many” is used for countable plural nouns (e.g., children, oranges), and where “much” is used for non-countable singular nouns (e.g., sand, water).

<sup>8</sup> Examples include: ימים רבים [*yamim rabim*] [“many days”], appearing in 35 places in Scripture; נשים רבות [*nashim rabot*] [“many women”], appearing, e.g., in Judges 8:30 and Ezek. 16:41.

<sup>9</sup> Such as שנים הרבה [*shanim harbei*] [“many years”], appearing in Eccl. 11:8.

<sup>10</sup> *Harbei* can also precede a plural noun; though this does not appear in Scripture.

<sup>11</sup> See the article at the website of the Academy of the Hebrew Language, <https://hebrew-academy.org.il/2018/02/20/הרבה-דברים-או-דברים-רבים/>

Question 6: **Further**, why does it say “**make a fence around the Torah,**” for can one single fence be made around the entire Torah? Isn’t it so that every mitzvah requires a restriction and a fence, tailored to the particular details of that mitzvah? Thus, he should have said “**fences.**”

**Further, how are these three matters connected to each other?**

אָמנם נשְׁפִילָה בְּדַרְךְ תָּמִים, בְּמֵה שֶׁכָּתַב הַרְמַב"ם בְּפָרָק י"א מֵהִלְכוֹת סְנֵהֲדָרִין, דִּינֵי מְמוֹנוֹת וְהִטְהָרוֹת וְהַטּוֹמְאוֹת, מוֹנִין הָאָב וּבְנוֹ, הָרַב וְתַלְמִידוֹ בְּשָׁנִים. וְדִינֵי נְפִשׁוֹת, מוֹנִין אוֹתָם כְּאַחַד. זֶה שֶׁאָנוּ מוֹנִין וְכו'. וּפִירֵשׁ שָׁם הַפְּסָף מְשָׁנָה, דְּסִבִּירָא לִיה, כִּי פְסָלִין קְרוֹבִים לְדוֹן, הֵינּוּ דְנֹקָא כְּשֶׁעוֹמְדִין שָׁם בְּשַׁעַת גְּמַר דִּין, דְּהֵינּוּ כְּשֶׁאוֹמְרִים, אִישׁ פְּלוֹנֵי אַתָּה זָכָאי, אִישׁ פְּלוֹנֵי אַתָּה חַיִּיב. אָבֵל קוֹדֵם לְכוֹ, נוֹשְׂאִים וְנוֹתְנִים עִמּוֹ, וְנִמְנָגִים עִמּוֹ לְרֵאוֹת אִם רַבּוּ הַמְּזַכִּין אוֹ הַמְּחַיִּיבִין. וְהִרְאָב"ד סִבִּירָא לִיה, שֶׁאֲדַרְבָּא, הֲבֵן הוֹלֵךְ לוֹ, כְּדֵי שְׂלֵא יִטְעָה אַדָּם בְּהֵם לֹמַר שֶׁיְהִיוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם מִן הַמְּנַגְּוֹ, וְעַיִן שָׁם.

Indeed, “we will study the way of the blameless,”<sup>12</sup> in what the Rambam wrote in Mishneh Torah, in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Laws of the Sanhedrin, halacha 7:

**[Regarding] monetary cases and [questions of] ritual purity and impurity, they count a father and his son, [and] a teacher and his student, as two [judges]. [Regarding] cases of capital punishment, lashes, and the sanctification of the moon and the declaration of a leap year, they are counted as one.**

**That we count** a father and a son either as one or as two applies when one is a member of the *Sanhedrin* and the other was one of the students attending the court who said: “I can contribute a rationale that will lead to his vindication,” or “. . . to his being held liable.” We listen to his words and enable him to participate in the debate, and he is counted in the polling of the judges.

At the time of the final judgment, relatives are not included. For judges who are related to each other are not acceptable to rule together, as will be explained.

- Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Sanhedrin, 11:7–9

**The Kessef Mishneh**<sup>13</sup> explains there, that according to his opinion, we disqualify relatives of the official judge from judging, specifically when they stand at the hour of the final judgment, that is, when they say, “so-and-so, you are exonerated,” [and] “so-and-so, you are liable.” But before this, [the relatives] debate the matter with [the official judge], and [the relatives] are counted with [the official judge] to see if the majority exonerate or hold liable.

<sup>12</sup> This is an alteration of Ps. 101:2, “I will study the way of the blameless . . .”

<sup>13</sup> Rabbi Joseph Karo (1488–1575), author of the Beit Joseph and Shulchan Aruch. The *Kessef Mishneh* (Venice, 1574–75) is a commentary on the Rambam’s *Mishneh Torah*.

**The opinion of the Ra'avad<sup>14</sup> is that, contrary to the Mishneh Torah, even in monetary cases, a father and son, or a teacher and student, would be counted as only one judge, and the son goes to [his father, the official judge], to share what he wants to share, but he doesn't participate in the debate and is not counted in the polling of the judges, so that a man won't err by them, to say that both of them are counted, and see there.**

ואחר כך פתב הרמב"ם, תלמיד שהיה חכם ומבין והיה מחוסר קבלה, הרי רבו מוסר לו הקבלה שהיא צריכה לה בדין זה, והוא דן עמו בדיני נפשות. וכתב הפסוק משנה, אומר רב, שונה אדם לתלמידו, ודן עמו בדיני נפשות, ואותיבנא עליה מבריתא, דהשקרות והטומאות, רב ותלמידו, אב ובנו, מונין להם שנים. דיני נפשות, אין מונין אלא אחד. ופריק, כי קאמר רב, כגון רב פהנא ורב אסי, דלגמריה דרב הוה צרכי, ולסבריה לא הוה צרכי. ופרש רש"י הטעם, דכינן דלסבריה לא צריד, גברא באפי נפשיה הוא, דאי משום גמרא דשמע מיניה, כל ישראל נמי ממשה קבלו, עכ"ל.

**Afterward, the Rambam wrote:**

**When a student is wise and understanding but is lacking sufficient knowledge of the tradition, his master may convey to him the tradition which he requires with regard to these laws, and then he may serve as a judge even in cases regarding capital punishment.**

- Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Sanhedrin, 11:10

**The Kessef Mishneh writes:**

**Rav said: A person may teach his student [the relevant material] and then judge [cases of] capital law with him [and this student can participate in the deliberations and serve as one of the judges].**

**An objection is raised from a *Baraita*: [In cases of] ritual purity and impurity, if two of the judges are a teacher and his student, [or] a father and his son, [the court] counts them as two [opinions]. For [cases of] capital law, they are only counted as one.<sup>15</sup>**

**This is resolved: when Rav said [his statement, he is referring to not every student, but only those] such as Rav Kahana and Rav Asi, who needed [to learn] the [halachic] traditions of Rav, but they did not need [to learn] the analytical ability of Rav [as they were capable of conducting their own analysis].**

- Kessef Mishneh, based on Sanhedrin 36a–b

---

<sup>14</sup> Abraham ben David (“the Ra'avad”) (c. 1125–1198), Provençal rabbi; *Hasagot HaRaavad on Mishneh Torah* 11:9.

<sup>15</sup> Monetary cases could be heard by a court of three judges. Capital cases would be heard by a Lesser Sanhedrin of 23 judges, which were present in every city. Appeals from the Lesser Sanhedrins were taken to the Great Sanhedrin of 71 judges.

**Rashi explains: The reason is that since they didn't need [the teacher's] analytical ability, as they were able to independently analyze the fact pattern and apply the Torah law, the man's life was before him, i.e., they were qualified to serve as judges in a capital case. For if it were only because of the halachic traditions that they heard from [their teacher] that they were able to participate, then all of Israel also received this from Moses and could have been counted as judges.**

והכנסת הגדולה בחשון משפט סימן י"ח בהגהת בית יוסף אות נ"ו, נסתפק בדעת הרמב"ם, אי סבירא ליה, דבדיני ממונות, דנקא בתלמיד דלגמריה דרב צריף ולסבריה לא צריף, נמניו לשנים. אכל התלמיד וכו'. ולפי זה, לא פליג רמב"ם עם ראב"ד אלא בגרסת הברייתא וכו', ועיין שם. וכפי הנראה, אין מקום לספק זה, שהרי בתלמיד דלגמריה צריף ולסבריה לא צריף, כבר השמיענו הרמב"ם ז"ל דאפילו בדיני נפשות נמנה לשנים, והיגו דרב פהנא ודרב אסי תלמידי דרב, וצריף עיין.

**The sefer *Kneset HaGedolah, Choshen Mispat*<sup>16</sup> (siman 18 on the commentary of the Beit Yosef, note 6), was satisfied with the opinion of the Rambam, if he maintains, that for monetary cases, the student needed the halachic traditions of his teacher, but they did not need [to learn] the reasoning abilities of his teacher. In such a case, [the teacher and student] are counted as two judges. But for a student who requires the halachic traditions and the reasoning abilities, [the teacher and student] are counted as [only] one [judge].**

**According to this, the Rambam only disputed with the Ra'avad on the wording of the *Baraita*, and see there. As it appears, there's no room to doubt this, that for a student who needs the halachic traditions, but not the reasoning abilities of his teacher, the Rambam of blessed memory has already informed us, that even for cases of capital punishment, they are counted as two judges, and this corresponds to Rav Kahana and Rav Asi, and requires investigation.**

ומעתה הן סדר למשנה, דכל היכא שהתלמיד צריף לגמריה ולסבריה דרב, שריף למימר ביה לשון "קבל". אכל היכא דלגמריה צריף ולסבריה לא צריף, לא שריף ביה לשון קבלה, אלא לשון מסיבה, כמו שכתב הרמב"ם בתלמיד שהיה חכם ומבין, הרי רבו "מוסר" לו וכו'. ומשום הכי, במשה שהיה צריף מהקדוש ברוך הוא גמרא וסברא, שריף למימר ביה לשון "קבל". אכל יהושע לא היה צריף לסברא דמשה, חדא, דכתיב "ומשרתו יהושע בן-נון נער לא ימיש" וכו', ועיין שם במדרשים. ועוד, שכל אותו הדור ששמעו קולו של הקדוש ברוך הוא בהר סיני, היתה להם סברא ישרה. ועוד, שהרי נקראו דור דיעה.

**Now the Mishnah makes sense, and we can understand the first question of why the Torah was 'received' in some cases and "transmitted" in other cases. For in every case that the student**

<sup>16</sup> Rabbi Chaim Benveniste (1603–1673), rabbi of Izmir, Turkey. The first part of his commentary, *Kneset HaGedolah*, on Choshen Mishpat, was published in Izmir in 1660.

needs the [halachic] traditions and the reasoning abilities of his teacher, it's appropriate to speak in the language of "received." But where he needs the halachic traditions but doesn't need the reasoning abilities, the language of receiving is not appropriate for him, but rather the language of transmission. This is as the Rambam wrote for the student who was wise and discerning, thus his teacher transmitted to him, etc. Because of this, for Moses, who needed from the Holy One, Blessed be He, both the halachic traditions and the reasoning abilities, it was appropriate to speak in the language of "received." But Joshua didn't need the reasoning abilities from Moses, and the word "transmitted" was therefore appropriate for Joshua. We understand this, first, as it is written, "The L-rd would speak to Moses face-to-face, as one person speaks to another, and he would then return to the camp; but his assistant, Joshua son of Nun, a young man, would not stir out of the Tent,"<sup>17</sup> and see there in the Midrash.<sup>18</sup> Further, the entire generation that heard the voice of the Holy One, Blessed be He, at Mt. Sinai, had received reasoning abilities direct from G-d. Further, they were called the generation of knowledge.<sup>19</sup>

ולפי זה, יובן הפסוק "כי כל־העדה כלם קדשים", ופרש רש"י, וכי אתם לבדכם שמענתם בסיני "אנכי ה' אלהיך", כל העדה שמעו. וקשה, ומה טעם הוא זה לחלוק על משה, והלא משה שמע כל התורה, והם לא שמעו אלא "אנכי" ו"לא יקנה לך". אלא נדאי שפוננת קרח היתה לומר, הואיל וכל העדה שמעו קולו של הקדוש ברוך הוא וקנו דיעה וסברה, שאינם צריכים עוד לסברתו של משה, ויכולים לדון עמו בדיני נפשות, כלם נקראים בכלל סנהדרין, ונקראים "אלהים" מומחים ודיינים, כמו שנקרא משה "איש האלהים". וזהו "כי כל־העדה כלם קדשים ובתוכם ה' ", ש"אלהים נצב בעדת־אל".

Because of this, we will understand the verse of Korach's rebellion, when the participants challenged Moses, saying, "You have gone too far, for all the community are holy, all of them, and the L-rd is in their midst; why then do you raise yourselves above the L-rd's congregation?"<sup>20</sup> Rashi explains, "You're not the only ones who heard at Sinai: 'I am the L-rd thy G-d.' All the congregation heard it!"<sup>21</sup>

A difficulty is, what is the reason for Korach and those with him to disagree with Moses, for didn't Moses hear all of the Torah, and they only heard the first two commandments, "I [*anochi*] am the L-rd, your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage" and "You shall have no other gods besides Me."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ex. 33:11.

<sup>18</sup> Menachot 99b: "[Rabbi Yonatan said]: The Holy One, Blessed be He, saw Joshua, that words of Torah were very precious to him, as it is stated: '[And the L-rd spoke to Moses face-to-face] . . . and his servant Joshua, son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the Tent' (Ex. 33:11). The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to him: Joshua, are words of Torah so precious to you? [I bless you that] 'this Torah scroll shall not depart from your mouth.' "

<sup>19</sup> Num. Rabbah 19:3; Yalkut Shimoni on Nach 178:1; Rashi on I Chronicles 2:6; Zohar II:62b; Zohar Chadash, Chukat 136.

<sup>20</sup> Num. 16:3.

<sup>21</sup> Rashi to Num. 16:3, based upon Midrash Tanchuma, Korach 4.

<sup>22</sup> Ex. 20:2-3. Horayot 8a-b discusses whether the people heard all Ten Commandments, or only the first two. A later opinion from Chassidic tradition is that the people only heard the first word, *anochi*, or only the first syllable.

Rather, it's certain that the intention of Korach was to say: All the community heard the voice of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and acquired mental capacity and reasoning abilities, so that they no longer required the reasoning abilities of Moses. Thus, they are able to judge with him [cases of] capital law, and so all are included in the category of Sanhedrin, and should be called in the name of G-d as experts and judges, as Moses is called "a man of G-d."<sup>23</sup> This is the meaning of, "For all the community are holy, all of them, and the L-rd is in their midst," that "G-d stands in the divine assembly."<sup>24</sup>

וכן יהושע נמי מסר לזקנים שיקראו ימים אחריו, שגם הם היו מן הדור דיעה, ולא היו צריכים אל סברתו. וזקנים לנביאים, שאין הקדוש ברוך הוא משנה שכינתו אלא על בעלי סברא וישרה, כמו שפתי הרמב"ם בפרק ז' מהלכות יסודי התורה, אדם שהוא ממולא בכל המדות, ותהיה לו דיעה נכונה לדעת ולהשיג, מיד רוח הקדוש שורה עליו וכו', עכ"ל. ונביאים מסרוה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה, שגם הם היו מצויקי ארץ, ולא היו צריכים אלא לגמרא ולא לסברא.

Thus, Joshua also transmitted to the elders who lived on after him,<sup>25</sup> for they were also from the generation of understanding, and they did not need his reasoning abilities. The elders transmitted to the prophets, for the Holy One, Blessed be He, would only spread His Shechinah over those who had straightforward reasoning abilities, as the Rambam wrote in the seventh chapter of the Mishneh Torah, laws of The Foundations of the Torah, halacha 1, "a man who is full of these qualities and . . . possesses an accurate mental capacity to comprehend and grasp [them] . . . the divine spirit will immediately rest upon him." The prophets transmitted it to the Men of the Great Assembly, who were also "pillars of the earth,"<sup>26</sup> and they only needed the halachic traditions and not the reasoning abilities.

אמנם, אחר זה נתמעטו הדורות, והיו צריכים לקבל מהרב בין הגמרא ובין הסברא, ומשום הכי, בדורות הבאים אמר הספא, הלל ושמאי "קבלו" וכו'. וכן בלם.

Indeed, after that, the generations declined, and each of them had to receive from their rabbi both the halachic traditions and the reasoning abilities, and because of this, for the coming generations, the Tanna says, "Hillel and Shammai "received [it]" etc. This is the case for all the other generations listed in Pirkei Avot.

---

<sup>23</sup> Deut. 33:1.

<sup>24</sup> Ps. 82:1.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Joshua 24:31, "Israel served the L-rd during the lifetime of Joshua and the lifetime of the elders who lived on after Joshua."

<sup>26</sup> I Sam. 2:8.

ומה שאמר "מסיני", לפי שמשה זכה לקבל התורה דוקא מחמת מעמד הר סיני, שהרי מתחלה כתיב "השמים שמים ליהנה והארץ נתן לבני־אדם", והיינו שהעליונים לא ירדו לתחתונים, ומתחתונים לא יעלו למעלה. וכיון שירד הקדוש ברוך הוא על הר סיני, בטל הגזירה, ומשום הכי, גם משה היה יכול לעלות לשמים. וסוד מעמד זה היה די לבטל הזיהומא שהטיל הנחש בַחַוָּה, דכשעמדו על הר סיני, פסקה וזהמתו, לפי שאז נתרחבה הקדושה בעולם הזה, והטומאה ברחוקה והלכה לה, וכל זה היה סיוע שיש בו ממש, שיתגלה אור התורה בעולם הזה, להבין סודותיה וטעמיה.

**As for the second question, why the Tanna said from Sinai,” it’s because Moses merited to receive the Torah specifically because he stood at Mount Sinai. That is, initially there was a decree, as it is written, “The heavens are the heavens of the L-rd, and the earth He gave to the children of man.”<sup>27</sup> That is, these were separate domains, such that the celestial beings didn’t actually descend all the way to the earthly beings, and the earthly beings didn’t actually ascend all the way upward.<sup>28</sup> However, since the Holy One, Blessed be He, descended upon Mount Sinai, the decree that the domains were kept strictly separate was nullified, and because of this, even Moses was able to ascend to Heaven. The esoteric secret of this presence at Mount Sinai was enough to nullify the moral contamination of man that the serpent had cast upon Eve. For when they stood at Mount Sinai, their moral contamination ceased,<sup>29</sup> for now the holiness spread wide in this world, and the impurity fled and went away. All this was Heavenly “assistance with substance,”<sup>30</sup> allowing the light of Torah to be revealed in this world, with understanding of [the Torah’s] secrets and reasons.**

ולכן, אנשי כנסת הגדולה שראו שהיו מתמעטים הלבבות, הנהירו על שלושה דברים הללו. ותחלת דבריהם, "היו מתונים בדין", דבפרק קמא דסנהדרין, אמר בר קפרא, מנא הא מלתא דאמור רבנו הווי מתונים בדין, כלומר, דלקיות מתונים בדין כפר נפקא לן מ"אשרו תמוז", ולא היה צורך כלל שאנשי כנסת הגדולה יתדשו לנו דבר זה, ועל כרחוק צריך לומר, שפוננה אחרת היתה להם, ובצי בגמרא. מנלו דבעינו האי מיתון אף לאחר המיתון של "אשרו תמוז", ותריץ, מ"ולא-תעלה במעלות" וכי, והיינו כמו שפיתב מהרש"א, שאפלו אם יהיה הדין ברור לו פשמש, יש לו לירא פן עדיין לא הגיע לעומק הדין, ויחשב בעצמו להיות ממדרגה שפלה, שאינם יכולים להגיע לעומק הדין כל כך מהר.

**Therefore, we can now understand the answer to our third question. It was because the Men of the Great Assembly saw that “the hearts were shrinking,”<sup>31</sup> i.e., that the generations**

<sup>27</sup> Ps. 115:16.

<sup>28</sup> Sukkah 5a: “It’s taught [in a Baraita] that Rabbi Yosei says: The Divine Presence never [actually] descended below, and Moses and Elijah never [actually] ascended [to Heaven] on high, as it is stated: ‘The heavens are the heavens of the L-rd, and the earth He gave to the sons of man’ (Ps. 115:16).”

<sup>29</sup> Shabbat 145b–146a: “[Rabbi Yochanan explained:] Why are gentiles [morally] contaminated? [Because] they did not stand on Mount Sinai. As when the snake came upon Eve [convincing her to eat from the Tree of Knowledge], it infected her with [moral] contamination [and this contamination remained in all human beings]. [When] Israel stood at Mount Sinai, their contamination ceased, [whereas] gentiles did not stand at Mount Sinai, and their contamination never ceased.”

<sup>30</sup> The term appears, e.g.: Rabbi Yair Chaim Bacharach, *Chavot Ya’ir* (Frankfurt 1699) 11:13; Shimon ben Tzemach Duran, *Sefer haTashbetz* (Amsterdam 1738), Introduction, 1; Yaakov Emden; *Sheilat Yaavetz* (Altona 1738) I:22:5.

<sup>31</sup> The term appears, e.g.: Rashi on Bava Metzia 33a.



declined, that they **warned about these three things**, “Be patient in [the administration of] justice, raise many disciples and make a fence around the Torah.”

**The beginning of their words is “be patient in [the administration of] justice,” as in the first chapter of tractate Sanhedrin (7b), Bar Kappara said, “From where is this matter stated by the Sages [derived]: ‘Be patient in [the administration of] justice’?** As it is written: ‘Neither shall you go up by steps [onto My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed upon it]’ (Ex. 20:23) [i.e., do not ascend hurriedly], and juxtaposed [to this verse, it is written: ‘Now these are the ordinances [that you shall set before them] (Ex. 21:1).”

That is, it’s **as if to say, that to “be patient in [the administration of] justice” was already derived for us from the verse, “relieve the oppressed,”**<sup>32</sup> as we discussed above, that in Sanhedrin 35a, Rava interpreted “relieve the oppressed” as “praise [*ashru*] the judge who delays [*mechametz*] his verdict [before he pronounces it].” Also mentioned above was that Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat, siman 10 (se’if 1), uses the language, “The judge must be patient in the [administration of] justice, that he should not give a decision before he protracts [his deliberations] and discussed it [the law] and it becomes clear to him as the sun.

This was the basis of our fourth question at the beginning of this essay, as to what novelty the Men of the Great Assembly were bringing. Perhaps **it was not necessary at all for the Men of the Great Assembly to bring this** Mishnah “be patient in [the administration of] justice” **as a new matter for us? You must necessarily say that they had another intent, and the Gemara in Sanhedrin 7b questions this.**

**How do we know that this requirement of patience of our Mishnah, Pirkei Avot 1:1, is a separate teaching that comes only after the teaching of patience based upon Rava’s interpretation of “relieve the oppressed”? The solution, as provided by Bar Kappara, is from the verse, “Neither shall you go up by steps [onto My altar]” (Ex. 20:23)?** The answer to our fourth question, **as the Maharsha wrote, is that even if justice was as clear to [a judge] as the sun, he should fear that he has not yet reached the “profundity of justice,” and he should consider himself to be of a lowly rank, who is not able to arrive at the profundity of justice so quickly.**<sup>33</sup> So “relieve the oppressed” may teach a judge to delay his verdict, so as to protract his deliberations, and to discuss the law until it becomes very clear, but our Mishnah, as supported by “Neither shall you go up by steps to My altar,” teaches something further, that the judge also has to delay until he achieves the right mindset of humility and fear, lest he render the wrong judgment.

---

<sup>32</sup> Isaiah 1:17.

<sup>33</sup> Rabbi Shmuel Eliezer Eidels (“the Maharsha”) (1555–1631), *Chiddushei Agadot* on Sanhedrin 7b. The term, “profundity of justice,” appears, e.g., in Pesachim 54b.

ומשום הכי, איצטריכו לומר הווי מתונים בדין. משום דמ"אשרו חמוץ" לא שמעינן אלא שטוב להיות מתונים כדי להגיע לעומק הדין. אמנם מ"ולא-תעלה במעלת" מוכח שאף על פי שהנה בו פס לעלות במעלות ולפסוק הדין שהנה ברור לו כשמש, עם כל זה צריך להיות מתון, כי שמה עדיין לא הגיע לאמיתות הדין. וזהו "אשר לא-תגלה ערותך" וכו', שאחר המיתון הצריך כדי שיהנה ברור לו כשמש, עוד צריך מתון אחר, לראות שמה הוא טועה בסברתו, מאחר שראו שהדורות מתמעטים והולכים בדתם ובסברתם.

**Because of this, they needed to say, "Be patient in [the administration of] justice." Because of "relieve the oppressed," they only informed us that it is good to be patient in order to arrive at the profundity of justice. However, from "Neither shall you go up by steps [onto My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed upon it]," it is proven that even though [a judge] had the power to go up by steps and to quickly render a judgment that was as clear as the sun, nevertheless it was necessary to be patient, lest he still not arrive at the truth of the judgment. This is the meaning of, "that your nakedness may not be exposed," that after the patience that was needed in order that [the judgment] be as clear as the sun, an additional patience was still necessary, to see lest [the judge] was erring in his analytical ability, after [the Men of the Great Assembly] saw that the generations declined and continued to do so in their knowledge and in their analytical ability.**

ומשום דאמרינן במסכת נדה, שאין לאשה לבדוק עצמה בפני בעלה, דאם פן לבו נוקפו ופורש, ואף פאן יש לחוש שמה לעולם יהיה לבו נוקפו, ויתגברא פן לא הגיע לעומק ולא ירצה לדון, או יעשה ענוי דין. לפיכך אמרו "העמידו תלמידים", שפשיהנה להם תלמידים רבים, בנדאי שיהנה ביניהם בעלי סברא להבין ולדקדק, ומתוך הויכוח יתברר האמת, ואז אין מקום לטעות ולהסתפק. ועוד, שיעמדו למנון, ו"אחרי רבים להטות". ומשום הכי אמר "הרבה" ולא "רבים", פלומר, כדי לקח מנון ההרבה מן המועט. ועוד יש לומר, שרצה לרמוז שיעמיד תלמידים טובים, שגאמר בהם, הרבה תורה למדתי מרבתי, ומתלמידי יותר מכלם.

*Toldot Shimshon* also asked the motivation of the Men of the Great Assembly for the teaching "raise many disciples," and in question 5 asked why they used the word "*harbei*." **It says in tractate Niddah that a woman should not examine herself in front of her husband before engaging in intercourse, to confirm that she is not impure, because if she were to do so, the heart of a scrupulous husband might trouble him with pangs of conscience over sins that he could transgress, and he will separate from his wife out of fear that she is impure, even if she is not.<sup>34</sup> Because of that thinking, so too here regarding judges, one should fear lest his heart trouble him forever, and he should fear lest he not arrive at a profundity of judgment, and not want to judge because of that fear, or lest he arrive at a miscarriage of justice.**

**Therefore, [the Men of the Great Assembly] said, "raise many disciples," that when they will have many disciples, certainly among them there will be some who are masters of**

<sup>34</sup> Niddah 12a, quoting Rav Yehuda.

reasoning abilities to understand and to be precise in judgment, and from the arguments before the court, the truth will become clear, and thus there is no room to err or to doubt oneself.

Further, [the judges] should stand to be counted, i.e., they take a vote, “and defer to the majority [*rabim*] [רבים].”<sup>35</sup> Ex. 23:2 is cited in Sanhedrin 2a as teaching that we “defer to the majority,” and yet in the context of the entire verse, *rabim* means “multitude” instead of “majority,” thus: “You shall not follow a multitude [*rabim*] to do evil; neither shall you bear witness in a case so as to follow a multitude [*rabim*] to pervert justice.” Because of this, [the Tanna] said the word *harbei* [הרבה] and not the word *rabim* [רבים], as if to say, in order to take a reckoning of the many from the few, i.e., there would be 23 judges in a Lesser Sanhedrin, and they would follow the majority in determining the outcome, per Ex. 23:2. However, because the word *rabim* has a bad connotation in that verse, as one could wrongly follow a crowd, the Tanna of our Mishnah instead uses the word *harbei*.<sup>36</sup>

Further, it can be said, that [the Tanna] used the word *harbei* because he wanted to hint that he should raise good disciples, about which it is said by Rabbi Chanina: “I have learned much [*harbei*] Torah from my teachers, and even more from my friends, but from my students [I have learned] more than [from] all of them.”<sup>37</sup>

אָבֵל אַפְתִּי אֶפְשֶׁר דְּנַפִּיק חוֹרְבָה מִיְנִיָּה, שְׂאֵם הָרַב נִמְנָה עִם תַּלְמִידוֹ, יְבוֹאוּ לְהַכְשִׁיר אֶף בְּאֵב וּבְנוֹ, וְיִגְמַר הַדִּין בְּקְרוֹבִים. לְפִי זֶה אָמַר וַעֲשׂוּ סִיּוּג לַתּוֹרָה, דְּהֵינּוּ אִם כְּדַבְּרֵי הָרַמְבַּ"ם, שְׁלֵא יִהְיוּ עִמּוֹ בְּשַׁעַת פְּסַק דִּין, וְאִם כְּדַבְּרֵי הָרַאב"ד, שְׁיוֹצִיאֵם אֶף קוֹדֵם גְּמַר דִּין.

*Toldot Shimshon* also asked the motivation of the Men of the Great Assembly for the teaching to “make a fence around the Torah.” But even now that we have learned the circumstances under which a student can be counted with his teacher, it is possible that ruin may come from that. For if the teacher is counted with his student, they may come to qualify even a father and son, and the justice will end soon. According to this, [the Tanna], quoting the Men of the Great Assembly, said “make a fence around the Torah,” that is, if we rule in accordance with the Rambam, the fence around this mitzvah is that [the student] should not be with him at the time of rendering judgment, or if we rule in accordance with the words of the Ra’avad, that [the student] should leave before the rendering of judgment.

---

<sup>35</sup> Ex. 23:2.

<sup>36</sup> The translator is uncertain if he has captured the intent, and—as always—would welcome corrections or suggestions.

<sup>37</sup> Ta’anit 7a.

ועוד יש לומר, משה קבל תורה "מסיני" וכו', שאם הנה אומר קבל תורה "מהקדוש ברוך הוא", הנה מוכן שקבל התורה באותן ארבעים יום שעלה משה לשמים, שאז גלה לו הקדוש ברוך הוא כל סודותיה ותעלומיה, והאיר נשמתו לקבל התורה שהיא בלתי תכלית. ואם היינו אומרים כן, הורע כחה של קבלה זו, שהרי יש מקום לומר, שכל מה שקבל לא נתקיים בידו, שהרי אז הנה מופשט מהחומר ומלובש ברוחניות, ומשום הכי הנה יכול להשיג בדעתו כל "תעלמות חכמה". אבל פשיטת לארץ ונתפשט מהרוחניות, ונזר והלביש את הגשמיות ובא לאויר העולם, בנדאי שנתעלמו ממנו הרבה סודות, דימא למאי דאמר, אוירא של ארץ ישראל, מחכים.

We discussed the second question above, of why the Mishnah says that Moses received the Torah "from Sinai," and we noted that Moses' ascent of Sinai was a special place that allowed the nullification of the decree keeping the domains of Heaven and earth strictly separate.

**Furthermore, it can be said on that second question, that Moses received the Torah "from Sinai," for if it had said that he received the Torah from the Holy One, Blessed be He, it would be understood that he received the Torah during the same 40 days that Moses ascended to Heaven, that then the Holy One, Blessed be He, had revealed to him all of [the Torah's] secrets and her hidden things, and had illuminated his spirit to receive the Torah, which is limitless.**

**If one were to say this, the power of this acceptance of the Torah by Moses would be diminished, for then one could say that everything that he received would not be of a permanent, enduring nature, for then Moses would have been stripped from the physical existence and clothed in spirituality. Because of this, he would have been able to attain in mind all "secrets of wisdom."<sup>38</sup> But when he descended to the earth, and separated from spirituality, and returned and became clothed with materiality and came to the air of the world, surely many secrets vanished from him. This is similar to what it said, "the air of the Land of Israel makes one wise,"<sup>39</sup> and after Moses' descent from Sinai, he was again in the wilderness, outside the Holy Land.**

ומשום הכי נקט התנא "מסיני", לאשמועינן שקבל אותה בהר סיני, כדכתיב "אלפי שגאן . . . סיני בקדש", שאף על פי שהיה איש חמרי והוא בתוך האויר של העולם, מכל מקום נתפשטה הקדושה עליו, שירדה שכינה למטה, והאיר עיניו ב"תעלמות חכמה".

**Because of this, the Tanna selected the word "from Sinai," to inform us that [Moses] received [the Torah] at Mount Sinai, as is written, "G-d's chariots are myriads, thousands upon thousands; the L-rd was among them, at Sinai, in holiness."<sup>40</sup> Even though [Moses] had a physical existence and existed among the air of the world, nevertheless holiness was spread out upon him, for the Shechinah descended below, and enlightened his eyes with "secrets of wisdom."**

<sup>38</sup> Job 11:6.

<sup>39</sup> Bava Batra 158b.

<sup>40</sup> Ps. 68:18.

אֵלָא שְׁלִפֵי דְרָדָּד זֵו, הִיָּה לֹו לֹוּמֵר קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה "בְּסִינַי", שְׁבֹא לְהוֹרוֹת מְקוֹם קִבְלָתָהּ בְּלִבְדוּ. וּלְפִיכָד יֵשׁ לְבֹאֵר, שְׁהִתְנַא בְּאֵ לְהוֹרוֹת לְגוּ נְמִי סִדֵּר קִבְלַת הַתּוֹרָה כִּי־צַד הִיָּתָה, דְּבִפְרָק ט' דְּשִׁבְתָּ אֲמַרִינוּ, שְׁכַפְּהָ עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת הָהָר כְּגִיגִית, וּמִכָּאן מוֹדְעָא רַבָּה לְאוֹרֵייתָא, וְכִתְבוּ שֵׁם הַתּוֹסֵפוֹת, וְאָף עַל פִּי שְׁכַבְרֵי הַקְדִּימוּ נַעֲשֶׂה לְנַשְׁמָע, שְׁמָא הִיוּ חוֹזְרִים כְּשֶׁרָאוּ הָאֵשׁ הַגְּדוֹלָה, שְׁיִצְתָּהּ נִשְׁמַתָּם, עכ"ל. נִמְצָא, שְׁמַחְמַת הָאֵשׁ הוֹצִרָהּ לְכַפּוֹת עֲלֵיהֶם אֶת הָהָר, זֶה גֵרַם שְׁאִין קִבְלָתָם קִבְלָה גְמוּרָה, שְׁהָרִי יֵשׁ לָהֶם מוֹדְעָא עֲלֵיהֶם. וְאִם לֹא הִיוּ חוֹזְרִים בָּהֶם, הִיוּ מְקַבְּלִים הֵם כֹּל הַתּוֹרָה כְּמוֹ מִשָּׁה. נִמְצָא, כִּי מֵה שְׁמַשָּׁה קִבֵּל הַתּוֹרָה לְבִדּוּ, הִיָּה "מְסִינַי", מַחְמַת שְׁכַפְּהוּ עֲלֵיהֶם.

**Rather, according to this way, he should have said that Moses received the Torah “at Sinai,” instead of “from Sinai,” for he came to instruct us only the place of [the Torah’s] reception. Therefore, we need to clarify that the Tanna came to instruct us also of the order of how the Torah was received, as in the ninth chapter of tractate Shabbat, saying, that “He overturned the mountain over them like a tub, and said to them: If you accept the Torah, excellent, and if not, there will be your burial. Rav Acha bar Ya’akov said: From here there is a substantial caveat to their obligation to fulfill the Torah.”<sup>41</sup> The Tosafists wrote there, “Even though they had already advanced ‘we will do’ before ‘we will hear,’<sup>42</sup> perhaps they retracted when they saw ‘the great fire’<sup>43</sup> [with which the L-rd descended, the great fire] that burned their souls [that is, that terrified them].”<sup>44</sup> It is found, that because of the fire, the mountain had to be overturned upon them, this resulted that their acceptance of the Torah was not a complete acceptance, for they have a caveat upon it. If they wouldn’t gone back on their word to keep the Torah, they would have received the entire Torah, like Moses. It’s found that as for Moses receiving the Torah by himself, it was “from Sinai,” because He overturned it upon [the people].**

וְאַחַר כֵּן, מוֹנֶה וְהוֹלֵךְ מְסִירַת הַתּוֹרָה בְּכָל דּוֹר וְדוֹר, עַד שְׁמַגִּיעַ לְאַנְשֵׁי כְּנֻסַת הַגְּדוֹלָה, לְפִי שְׁמַשָּׁה בְּלִבְדוּ קִבֵּל הַתּוֹרָה מְרֻצוֹן טוֹב בְּלֹא אָנֶס, וְיִהְיֶה שֵׁם הַתּוֹרָה תְּלִמִּידוֹ נֶאֱמָר, וְלֹא פָגַם עֲצָמוֹ בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַעֲגֹל. וְהַזְּקֵנִים אַחֵר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, כְּבָר תֵּשׁ כַּחֲסֵם, וְיִצְרָם פְּסָק מֵהֶם, וְהֵם מְסִירוּהָ לְנִבְיָאִים שֶׁהֵם קְדוֹשִׁים. וְנִבְיָאִים לְאַנְשֵׁי כְּנֻסַת הַגְּדוֹלָה, שְׁאֵזוּ קִיִּמוּ עֲלֵיהֶם הַתּוֹרָה כֹּל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרֻצוֹן טוֹב וְשֵׁלֶם, כִּי־דוּעַ שְׁמַרְדְּכִי בְלִשׁוֹן וְדִגְנֵאל, הִיוּ מְכַלְלִים הַמָּאָה וְעֹשְׂרִים זְקֵנִים שֶׁל אֲנָשֵׁי כְּנֻסַת הַגְּדוֹלָה.

**Afterward, the transmission of the Torah was counted in each and every generation, i.e., from Moses to Joshua, from Joshua to the elders, from the elders to the prophets, until reaching the members of the Great Assembly. This is because Moses alone received the Torah out of good will, without compulsion, and Joshua was his faithful disciple and didn’t defile himself with the incident of the Golden Calf. The elders after Joshua, even though they were**

<sup>41</sup> Shabbat 88a.

<sup>42</sup> Ex. 24:7, “All that the L-rd has spoken, we will do, and we will hear.” The rabbis interpreted this as meaning that the people agreed to “do” what the L-rd desired, even before they would “hear” the details.

<sup>43</sup> Ex. 19:18, “Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for the L-rd had come down upon it *in fire*; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently.” Deut. 18:16, “. . . Let me not hear the voice of the L-rd, my G-d, any longer, or see this great fire any more, lest I die.”

<sup>44</sup> Tosafot on Shabbat 88a.

not as faithful, they were elderly, so **their strength had grown weak, and their evil inclination had ceased, and they transmitted [the Torah] to the prophets, who were holy. The prophets transmitted it to the members of the Great Assembly, at which time all Israel fulfilled the Torah upon themselves with good and complete will, as is well known, Mordechai Bilshan<sup>45</sup> and Daniel were among the one hundred and twenty elders of the Men of the Great Assembly.**

ושלשה דברים שאמרו, הם מכוננים לשלוש הדיעות שאמרו במסכת שבת, על נוטריקון "אנכי". הווי מתונים בדין, כנגד "אנא נפשי כתבתי והבית", דאמרינן במדרש אם אין אדם שומרים הדינים, אני נוטל תורת מכם. ועוד, התורה, דינים מלפניה דינים מלאחריה, והיא באמצע, ובגמתינת התורה כתב בעצמו "אז ראה נוספרה" וכו', ואחר כך "ניאמר לאדם". משום הכי, חובה עליכם להיות מתונים בדין.

**And three things that they said, they are directed to the three opinions they said in Tractate Shabbat about the acronym represented by the first word of the Ten Commandments, “*anochi*” [אנכי] [“I”].<sup>46</sup>**

Rabbi Yochanan himself said [that the word] “*anochi*” [that begins the Ten Commandments is an] abbreviation [for]: “I myself wrote and gave” [*ana nafshi ketivat yehavit*].

The Rabbis said [it is an abbreviation for]: “A pleasant statement was written [and] given” [*amira ne’ima ketiva yehiva*].

Some say [the word] *anokhi* [can be interpreted] backwards: “It was given, it was written, faithful are its statements” [*yehiva ketiva ne’emanim amareha*].

- Shabbat 105a

**“Be patient in [the administration of] justice” corresponds to “I myself wrote and gave.” It’s written in the midrash, “if you do not guard the laws, I will take my Torah from you.”<sup>47</sup> Also, “The Torah [i.e., the Ten Commandments]: there are laws before it and laws after it, and it is in the middle.”<sup>48</sup> That is, Israel received a set of ordinances at Marah, the well of bitter water,<sup>49</sup> then received the Ten Commandments,<sup>50</sup> then received additional laws.<sup>51</sup> The**

<sup>45</sup> Ezra 2:1–2: “These are the people of the province who came up from among the captive exiles whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had carried into exile to Babylon, who returned to Jerusalem and Judah, each to his own city, who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah . . .” According to Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer 50:3, Bilshan is not a separate name, but a descriptive term for Mordechai, meaning *ba’al lashon*, “master of the language.” The idea is that Mordechai was a master of the 70 languages of mankind, and that is how he understood Bighthan and Teresh plotting against King Ahasuerus, in Esther 2:21–22.

<sup>46</sup> The Hebrew text uses the word *notarikon*, a Kabbalistic method of using the *roshei teivot* (initial letters) or *sofei teivot* (final letters) of a phrase as a word. In the case of the initial letters, the *notarikon* is essentially an acronym.

<sup>47</sup> Ex. Rabbah 30:23.

<sup>48</sup> Ex. Rabbah 30:3.

<sup>49</sup> Ex. 15:23–26.

<sup>50</sup> Ex. 20:1–14.

<sup>51</sup> Such as Ex. 20:21–23, and continuing with Ex. chapter 21.

Midrash adds, “Like a distinguished lady walking in the center of an armed guard, so has the Torah [i.e., the Ten Commandments], laws preceding it and laws following it, while it is in the middle.” The idea is that the various laws surrounding the Ten Commandments serve as a fence, with the Ten Commandments representing the principal part of the Law.

**In the giving of the Torah, He wrote himself, “Then did He see it, and declare it; He established it, and also examined it.”<sup>52</sup> Afterward, it says, “And He said to man, “See! Fear of the L-rd is wisdom; to shun evil is understanding.”<sup>53</sup> Because of this, it is incumbent upon you to be patient in [the administration of] justice.**

וּכְנָגַד "אֲמִירָה נְעִימָה" וְכוּ' אָמַר, הֶעֱמִידוּ תַלְמִידִים הַרְבֵּה, שְׁמִי שְׂרוּצָה לְהַעֲמִיד תַלְמִידִים, צָרִיף לְמִשׁוֹף אֶת לִבָּם בְּאוֹפֶן שִׁיָּהוּ דְבָרֵי תוֹרָה עֲרִיבִים עֲלֵיהֶם וְנְעִימִים.

**Corresponding to the words “A pleasant statement was written [and] given,” [the Tanna] said, “raise many disciples,” for one who wants to raise disciples, needs to attract their hearts in a way such that the words of Torah are sweet and pleasant for them.**

וּכְנָגַד "יְהִיבָה פְתִיבָה" וְכוּ' אָמַר, וַעֲשׂוּ סִיגֵי לַתּוֹרָה, כְּלוּמַר, תִּגְנוּ לָכֶם עוֹד מִצְוֹת אַחֲרוֹת עַד שֶׁתִּהְיֶינָה מְשֻׁמְרֵת לְמִשְׁמֵרֵתֵי, וְזֶהוּ יְהִיבָה פְתִיבָה, וּבְזֶה יִהְיוּ נֶאֱמָנִין אֲמֵרֵיהֶּ, שִׁיָּקִימוּ הַתּוֹרָה וְלֹא יִפְרְצוּ בָהֶם.

**Corresponding to the words “It was given, it was written, faithful are its statements,” [the Tanna] said, “make a fence around the Torah,” as if to say, give them other commandments until it will be “a safeguard for My prized possession.”<sup>54</sup> This is the answer to the 6<sup>th</sup> question, why the Tanna wrote “make a fence around the Torah,” referring to a single fence instead of a fence around each mitzvah. This is the meaning of, “it was given, it was written,” and in this it will be that “faithful are its statements,” that they will fulfill the Torah and they will not breach [its statements].**

We have also addressed above how each of the three teachings of the Men of the Great Assembly were related to each other.

\* \* \*

---

<sup>52</sup> Job 28:27.

<sup>53</sup> Job 28:28.

<sup>54</sup> Yevamot 21a; Moed Katan 5a.