

“על כן יאמר בספר מלחמות ה' את זהב בסופה”

The Connection between the Two Mountains that Crushed the Emorim and the Dust that Rose from the Babylonian Scholars and Was Apparent Even in Eretz Yisrael

In this week's parsha, parshas Chukas, we read (Bamidbar 21, 14): “על כן יאמר בספר מלחמות ה' את זהב בסופה ואת הנחלים ארנון, ואשד הנחלים אשר נטה לשבת ער ונשען לגבול מואב, ומשם בארה היא הבאר אשר אמר ה' למשה אסוף את העם ואתנה להם מים. אז ישיר ישראל את השירה הזאת עלי באר—about this it will be said in the sefer of the wars of Hashem: “That which was given at the Sea of Reeds and the valleys of Arnon; and the outpouring of the valleys when it veered to dwell at Ar, and leaned against the border of Moav. And from there to the well; it is the well of which Hashem said to Moshe, ‘Assemble the people and I shall give them water.’” Then Yisrael sang this song: “Come up O well, call out to it.”

According to Rashi, these pesukim refer to a great miracle that was performed on Yisrael's behalf. It transpired while the nation of Yisrael was preparing to pass through the valley of Arnon, which passes between two mountains—one mountain which is located in Eretz Yisrael and the other, opposite it, located in the land of Moav:

“על כן יאמר, על חניה זו ונסים שנעשו בה, יאמר בספר מלחמות ה', כשמוספרים נסים שנעשו לאבותינו יספרו את זהב וגו'... ואת הנחלים ארנון, כשם שמוספרים בני ים סוף, כך יש לספר בני ים חלי ארנון, שאף כאן נעשו נסים גדולים, ומה הם הנסים, ואשד הנחלים, תרגום של שפך אשד, שפך הנחלים, שנשפך שם דם אמוריים שהיו נחבאים שם.

לפי שהיו ההרים גבוהים והנחל עמוק וקצר, וההרים סמוכים זה לזה, אדם עומד על ההר מזה ומדבר עם חבירו בהר מזה, והדרך עובר בתוך הנחל. אמרו אמוריים, כשיכנסו ישראל לארץ ישראל לתוך הנחל לעבור, נצא מן המערות בהרים שלמעלה מהם ונהרגם בחצים ואבני בליסטאות.

והיו אותן הנקעים בהר של צד מואב, ובהר של צד אמוריים היו כנגד אותן הנקעים כמין קרנות ושדיים בולטין לחוץ, כיון שבאו ישראל לעבור, נזדעזעו ההר של ארץ ישראל כשפחה היוצאת להקביל פני גבירתה, ונתקרב לצד הר של מואב, ונכנסו אותן השדיים לתוך אותן נקעים והרגום. וזהו אשר נטה לשבת ער, שההר נטה ממקומו ונתקרב לצד מואב ונדבק בו, וזהו ונשען לגבול מואב.

ומשם בארה, משם בא האשד אל הבאר, כיצד, אמר הקב"ה מי מודיע לבני הנסים הללו. לאחר שעברו חזרו ההרים למקומם, והבאר ירדה לתוך הנחל, והעלתה משם דם ההרגים וזרועות ואיברים, ומוליכתן סביב המחנה, וישראל ראו ואמרו שירה. עלי באר, מתוך הנחל והעלי מה שאת מעלה.”

When they tell of miracles performed on behalf of our forefathers, they will also relate this event. Just as they tell of the miracles that occurred at Yam Suf, so, too, they will tell of the miracles of the valleys of Arnon; for here, too, great miracles were performed. The blood of the Emorim—who lay in wait, hiding--was spilled there.

The mountains there were high and the valley deep and narrow; so that the mountains were very close to one another. Yisrael's path passed through this valley. The Emorim's plan was to hide in the caves above and to come out and kill the people of Yisrael with arrows and catapult stones, as they attempted to pass through the valley. The mountains on the side of Moav contained caves; the Emorim hid in these caves. The mountains on the opposite side of the valley contained hornlike projections protruding outwards, aligned opposite the caves. When Yisrael came to pass through the valley, the mountain on the Eretz Yisrael side drew closer to the mountain on the side of Moav; the projections entered the corresponding caves and crushed those hiding inside them.

This miracle is only alluded to in the pesukim; at the time, the people of Yisrael were unaware of what had transpired. Yet, after they passed through the valley, the waters of the well flowed through the valley—bringing up the blood, the arms and the limbs of the enemy that was killed. When Yisrael saw the evidence of this miracle in their camp, they broke out in a song of praise: “Come up, O well”—bring forth from the valley the evidence of the miracle that took place.

It behooves us to analyze these events and consider what prompted HKB”H to perform this extraordinary miracle on behalf of Yisrael. He uprooted a mountain in Eretz Yisrael and merged it with a mountain in the land of Moav in order to pulverize the Emorim. Certainly, He had many other ways in which to decimate and bring about the downfall of the Emorim. Why this

specific method? Furthermore, it behooves us to scrutinize our blessed sages' interpretation of the passuk: **"את והב בסופה"**-- **that which was given at the Sea of Reeds**. According to the simple, straightforward interpretation of these words, they refer to the crushing of the Emorim by these two mountains. Yet, in the Gemara (Kiddushin 30b), Chazal elucidate this passuk as referring to the peaceful and loving relationship that exists between "talmidei-chachamim." They provide us with a similar elucidation with regards to the passuk (Tehillim 127, 5):

"לא יבושו כי ידברו את אויבים בשער. מאי את אויבים בשער, אמר רבי חייא בר אבא, אפילו האב ובנו, הרב ותלמידו, שעוסקין בתורה בשער אחד, נעשים אויבים את זה, ואינם זדים משם עד שנעשים אוהבים זה את זה, שנאמר את והב בסופה אל תקרי בסופה אלא בסופה."

"They shall not be shamed, when they speak with enemies at the gate." Who are the "enemies at the gate" referred to by the passuk? Even a father and his son, a Rav and his pupil, who are engaged in Torah-study at the same gate; they become each other's adversaries; and they do not vacate their positions until they make loving peace with one another, as it states: **"That which was given at the Sea of Reeds"**—do not read this as **"Reeds"** but rather as **"in the end."**

We must endeavor to explain the association between the "pshat"—the straightforward interpretation of the passuk—and the "drush"—the interpretation of the passuk by means of elucidation. According to the "pshat," the passuk is speaking of the merging of the two mountains; according to the "drush," the passuk is discussing the antagonism between Torah-scholars while debating an issue, and how they remain in their places until they resolve the matter amicably.

In Eretz Yisrael They Saw the Dust that Rose from Rav Huna's Students in Bavel

We shall begin to shed some light on the matter by introducing a fascinating passage from the Gemara (Ketubos 106a). Rav Huna was the Rosh Yeshivah in Bavel; he had eight-hundred students. Due to this large number of students: **"רב הונא הוה דריש בתליסר"**—his shiurim were transmitted via thirteen assistants, who divided up the students into smaller groups.

Our blessed sages report the following phenomenon: **"כי הוּי קיימי רבנן ממתיבתא דרב הונא ונפצי גלימיהו, הוה סליק אבקא וכסי ליה ליומא, ואמרי במערבא, קמו ליה ממתיבתא דרב הונא בבליא."** During the shiur, the students would spread their garments out on the ground and sit on them. After Rav Huna would conclude the shiur, they would

rise from their places and shake off the dust that had accumulated on their garments. The dust would rise to the heavens and obscure the light of the sun. The effect was so profound that even the residents of Eretz Yisrael recognized what was happening; they would proclaim: **"The students from Rav Huna's yeshivah in Bavel are standing up now."** In his commentary Ben Yehoyada (ibid.), the famous Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad comments:

"הוה סליק אבקא וכסי ליה ליומא. פירש רש"י ז"ל מאפיל החמה והיה ניכר בארץ ישראל. ולפי זה מוכרח לומר שהיה זה בדרך נס, לכבוד רב הונא ולכבוד הציבור הרבים שנאספים בדרשה שלו, כי בדרך טבע אי אפשר להיות דבר זה, שאותו אבק יתראה בארץ ישראל שהיא רחוקה כמה ימים מבבל, אפילו אם יהיו הנאספים ארבע מאות רבוא, אלא מוכרח לומר שהיה זה בדרך נס."

The dust would rise and obscure the light of the day. Rashi explains that it would darken the sun; and this would be evident in Eretz Yisrael. Hence, we must conclude that this was a miraculous event that transpired in honor of Rav Huna and in honor of the large congregation that gathered to hear his lecture. Based on the laws of nature, such a thing could not happen—for that dust to be seen in Eretz Yisrael, which was located several days journey away from Bavel—even if those gathered numbered four million. Instead, we must conclude that this occurred as the result of a miracle.

In Chiddushei Aggados (ibid.), the Maharal of Prague, explains this passage in his own inimitable way. He explains that when Rav Huna's students in Bavel rose and shook out their garments—in the merit of their Torah-study—clouds were formed in the skies from the dust that was released; they were so dense that they obscured the light of the sun. These clouds travelled from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael to deliver rains of berachah.

The Gemara explains (Taanis 25a): **"רבי חייא בר לולייני שמעינהו: Rabbi Chiya bar Lulyani—להנג ענני דקאמרי, ניתו וניתבי מיא בעמון ומואב"** heard the clouds in Eretz Yisrael saying: **"Let us go and deliver our water to Amon and Moav."** So, he would pray to HKB"Y: **"רבנו של עולם, כשנתת תורה לעמך ישראל, חזרת על כל אומות העולם ולא קיבלוהו, ועכשיו עולם, Master of the Universe, אתה נתת להם מטר, שדו הכא, שדיה אדוכתיהו"** **when you gave Your Torah to Your people, Yisrael, you visited all the nations of the world, and they refused to accept it. And now You are going to give them rain? Let them release their rain here (in Eretz Yisrael); the clouds released the rains where they were.**

According to this passage, these early scholars recognized the source of the rain clouds. Therefore, the Gemara states: **"ואמרי במערבא, קמו ליה ממתיבתא דרב הונא בבליא"**—**they would say in the west (in Eretz Yisrael): "They have gotten up from Rav**

Huna's yeshivah in Bavel. For, the inhabitants of Eretz Yisrael recognized that the rain clouds in Eretz Yisrael came from Bavel in the merit of the Torah-study of Rav Huna's students.

The Torah of Bavel as Compared to the Torah of Eretz Yisrael

As it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, I would like to propose my own explanation for this enigmatic passage—regarding the dust Rav Huna's students shook off of their garments, which rose up to obscure the light of the sun. I would like to refer to the sacred, heavenly discourse that took place between Abaye and Rava—who resided in Bavel--concerning the greatness of the Torah-scholars of Eretz Yisrael as compared to the greatness of the Torah-scholars of Bavel (Ketubot 75a): **“אמר אביי וחד מינייהו, עדיף כתר מינן”**—**Abaye said: One of theirs is better than two of ours.**

Rava adds the following to Abaye's comment: **“אמר רבא, וחד מינן כי סליק להתם, עדיף כתר מינייהו, דהא רבי ירמיה דכי הוה הכא לא הוה ידע מאי קאמרי”**. **Rava said: But when one of us goes up there, he is better than two of them. Consider the case of Rabbi Yirmiyah; when he was here, he did not know what the Rabbis were saying. Yet, when he went up there, he would refer to us as “foolish Babylonians.”** After Rabbi Yirmiyah went up to Eretz Yisrael, he became such a prominent Torah scholar that he viewed the Babylonian scholars as fools.

Nevertheless, we still have some explaining to do. Certainly, a scholar who goes up from Bavel to Eretz Yisrael attains the greatness of a resident of Eretz Yisrael. But why does he surpass them to the point that he is considered to be as great as two of them (the scholars of Eretz Yisrael)? We find an explanation in the Shitah Mekubetzes (ibid.) in the name of the Rivash:

“וכל חד מינן כי סליק להתם עדיף כתר מינייהו. נראה לי הטעם כי בני ארץ ישראל, טבע הארץ מסייע להם [להשיג השגות התורה] משום דאורא דארץ ישראל מחכים, אבל אינם רגילים ללמוד כל כך בחריפות כמו בני בבל, ולכן בבני בבל ההרגל [של חריפות הלימוד] מסייע, ולבני ארץ ישראל טבע הארץ, וטבע הארץ עדיף מן ההרגל, אבל כשבן בבל עולה לארץ ישראל, הנה ההרגל והטבע מסייעין אותו, ומשום הכי עדיף כתר מינייהו.”

It appears to me that the natural attributes of the land assist them (the scholars of Eretz Yisrael); because the air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wiser; however, they are not used to learning with as much intensity as the Babylonians. Therefore, the habits of the Babylonians assist them; whereas, the nature of the land assists the residents of Eretz Yisrael. The natural tendency of the land is superior to the other's good habits.

Nevertheless, when a Babylonian scholar goes up to Eretz Yisrael, both his good habits and the beneficial nature of the land assist him. As a result, he is equal to two of them.

Like a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to elaborate on the explanation of the Rivash. We find contradictory statements regarding the Torah of Eretz Yisrael versus the Torah of Bavel. On the one hand, we find that our blessed sages extol the praise and virtue of the Torah of Eretz Yisrael at length, as we see in the Gemara (B.B. 158b): **“אורא דארץ ישראל מחכים”—the air of Eretz Yisrael makes one wise.** Similarly, regarding the passuk (Bereishis 2, 12), the Midrash states (B.R. 16, 4): **“וזהב הארץ ההיא — טוב, מלמד שאין תורה כתורת ארץ ישראל, ולא חכמה כחכמת ארץ ישראל”**—**“The gold of that land is good.” This passuk teaches us that there is no Torah like the Torah of Eretz Yisrael, and there is no wisdom (chochmah) like the wisdom of Eretz Yisrael.**

Additionally, we find that Chazal praise the Torah scholars of Eretz Yisrael, stating that they are pleasant towards one another in matters of halachah. On the other hand, the scholars of Bavel attack one another, as we have learned in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 24a): **“מאי דכתיב (זכריה יא-ז) ואקח לי שני מקלות, לאחד קראתי נועם ולאחד, קראתי חובלים, נועם אלו תלמידי חכמים שבארץ ישראל שמנעימין זה לזה בהלכה, חובלים אלו תלמידי חכמים שבבבל שמחבלים זה לזה בהלכה.”** **What is the meaning of the passuk (Zechariah 11, 7): “And I took for myself two staffs, one I called ‘gracious’ and one I called ‘assaulters’? ‘Gracious’ represents the Torah scholars of Eretz Yisrael, who are gracious towards one another in matters of halachah. ‘Assaulters’ represents the Torah scholars of Bavel, who assault each other in matters of halachah.**

Furthermore, regarding the Talmud Bavli, the Gemara expounds on the following passuk (Eichah 3, 6): **“במחשכים הושכני”**—**“He has placed me in darkness like the eternally dead.”** **Rabbi Yirmiyah said: This alludes to the Talmud of Bavel.** Rashi explains: **“במחשכים הושכני, — שאין נוחין זה עם זה ותלמודם ספק בידם”**—due to their rivalry, their analysis remains inconclusive and in doubt; they remain confused as if they are surrounded by darkness. Thus, it seems as if Chazal were speaking ill of the Babylonian scholars; they are described as assaulting each other; their Talmud is compared to darkness.

The Halachah Accords with the Talmud Bavli rather than with the Talmud Yerushalmi

Yet, we find, on the other hand, a fundamental principle in the writings of the Rishonim. Whenever a halachic dispute exists between the Talmud Bavli and the Talmud Yerushalmi, the

halachah accords with the Bavli. Rashi (Chullin 3a) explains that we follow the viewpoint of the Talmud Bavli, because we reside in galut. Tosafot (A.Z. 38b) also state that we follow the rulings of the Babylonians and their Talmud.

In fact, we follow the Talmud Bavli not only with regards to “minhagim”—customs—but even with regards to actual, practical halachah—even when the ruling in the Bavli is more lenient than the ruling in the Yerushalmi. Here is what the Rif writes (end of Eiruvin), who is also cited by the Rosh (ibid.):

”דכיון דסוגיין דגמרא דילן להתירא, לא איכפת לן במאי דאסרי בגמרא דבני מערבא, דעל גמרא דילן סמכינן דבתרא הוא, ואינהו הוי בקיאי בגמרא דבני מערבא טפי מינן, ואי לאו דקים להו דהאי מימרא דבני מערבא לאו דסמכא הוא, לא קא שרו ליה אינהו.”

Let us explain the words of the Rif and the Rosh based on what we have learned in the Gemara (B.M. 86a): ”רב אשי ורביןא סוף” “Rav Ashi and Ravina shall be the last of the Amoraim. Rav Ashi and Ravina arranged all of the statements we have in the Talmud Bavli and placed them in the proper order, in association with the corresponding Mishnah. First, they clarified and refined all of the halachot established by the sages of Bavel and the sages of Eretz Yisrael. Rashi explains:

”סוף הוראה - סוף כל האמוראין. עד ימיהם לא היתה גמרא על הסדר, אלא כשהיתה שאלה נשאלת בטעם המשנה בבית המדרש, או שאלה על מעשה המאורע בדין ממון או איסור והיתר, כל אחד ואחד אומר טעמו. ורב אשי ורביןא סידרו שמועות אמוראין שלפניהם, וקבעו על סדר המסכתות, כל אחד ואחד אצל המשנה הראויה והשוניה לה, והקשו קושיות שיש להשיב, ופירוקים שראויים לתרץ, הם והאמוראים שעמהם, וקבעו הכל בגמרא.”

Until their time, the Gemara did not exist in any order or organized form. Rather, when a question was asked in the Beis Midrash regarding the rationale of a Mishnah, or a question was raised concerning a particular incident involving monetary issues or issues of prohibition and permissibility (ritual law), every Amora would state his own opinion. Then Rav Ashi and Ravina organized the statements of the Amoraim that preceded them, and organized them based on the order of the masechtot; every body of statements was appended to its appropriate and corresponding Mishnah. Additionally, they, together with the Amoraim that joined them, posed the difficulties that needed to be resolved and the questions that needed to be answered. This was all formalized in the Gemara.

After explaining the order of the tradition of the Torah that Moshe Rabeinu received from HKB”H on Har Sinai, the Rambam—Yisrael’s esteemed teacher—writes something to the same effect in the introduction to his opus the Yad HaChazakah:

”כל הדברים שבגמרא הבבלי, חייבין כל ישראל ללכת בהם, וכופין כל עיר ועיר, וכל מדינה ומדינה, לנהוג בכל המנהגות, שנהגו חכמי הגמרא, ולגזור גזירותם, וללכת בתקנותם, הואיל וכל אותם הדברים שבגמרא, הסכימו עליהם כל ישראל. ואותם החכמים שהתקינו, או שגזרו, או שהנהיגו, או שדנו דין, ולמדו שהמשפט כך הוא, הם כל חכמי ישראל, או רובם, והם ששמעו הקבלה בעיקרי התורה כולה, דור אחר דור, עד משה רבינו עליו השלום.”

Every Jew is obligated to follow all of the rulings in the Talmud Bavli. We compel every city and every country to act in accordance with all of the customs and practices practiced by the sages of the Gemara, and to rule in accordance with their decrees and to follow their amendments; seeing as all the rulings in the Gemara were agreed upon by all of Yisrael. Those sages that instituted the amendments, or issued the rulings, or established a practice, or passed a verdict, and taught that such and such is the law, they are all of the sages of Yisrael—or, at least, the majority. They are the ones who heard what was received concerning the essential tenets of the entire Torah, generation after generation, back to Moshe Rabeinu a”h.

This being the case, we are left somewhat baffled and incredulous. How does this coincide with all that we have learned concerning the tremendous merits of the Talmud Yerushalmi and the Torah of Eretz Yisrael, such as: “אזירא דארץ ישראל מחכים” and “שאין” “Now, the Rif cited above claims that Ravina and Rav Ashi—who arranged the Talmud Bavli—were well-versed in the Talmud Yerushalmi: “ואינהו הוי בקיאי” “בגמרא דבני מערבא טפי מינן” “Notwithstanding, we must endeavor to understand why HKB”H, who orchestrates everything, arranged for the Talmud Bavli to be adopted preferentially over the Talmud Yerushalmi throughout all of the communities of Yisrael.

The Residents of Bavel Had to Work Harder in Their Torah-study than the Residents of Eretz Yisrael

With reverence and love, let us endeavor to explain the matter. In truth, the Torah of Eretz Yisrael is to be loved and cherished, because it involves Jews learning Torah while living in their own, holy land. This is where HKB”H chose to rest His Shechinah, as it is written (Yeshayah 2, 3): “כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ה’ מירושלים” —for Torah will come forth from Tziyon and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim. Yet, precisely for this reason, those who learn Torah outside of Eretz Yisrael are cherished so dearly. For, due to the spiritual darkness in the lands of the nations, they have to labor and work harder in their Torah-study than their counterparts in Eretz Yisrael. As a result, the dictum we have learned in the Gemara (Megillah 6b) applies all the more so to them: “אם יאמר לך -אדם, יגעתי ולא מצאתי אל תאמן, לא יגעתי ומצאתי אל תאמן, יגעתי ומצאתי תאמן”

- if a person claims: "I labored and did not succeed," do not believe him; "I did not labor and I succeeded," do not believe him; "I labored and I succeeded," believe him.

With this in mind, we can better appreciate our blessed sages' elucidation regarding the Talmud Bavli from the passuk: **"במחשכים"** --הושיבני כמתי עולם-- **He has placed me in darkness like the eternally dead.** Since they had to reveal the light of Torah from amidst the darkness of galut, they merited the tremendous, exalted light of the Torah. The Zohar hakadosh explains (Tetzaveh 184a): **"דלית נהורא אלא ההוא דנפיק מגו חשוכא"**—there is no light comparable to the light that emerges from the darkness.

This agrees wonderfully with the elucidation in the Midrash Tanchuma (Noach 3) regarding Torah she'b'al peh from the passuk (Yeshayah 9, 1): **"העם ההולכים בחושך ראו אור גדול, אלו בעלי התלמוד שראו אור: גדול, שהקב"ה מאיר עיניהם באיסור והיתר בטמא ובטהור... לפיכך מתן שכרה לעולם הבא, שנאמר העם ההולכים בחושך ראו אור גדול, אור גדול - אור שנברא ביום ראשון, שגגזו הקב"ה לעמלי תורה שבעל פה ביום ובלילה."** **"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light."** This refers to the scholars of the Talmud who saw a magnificent light; for HKB"H illuminated their eyes regarding what is prohibited and what is permissible, what is tamei and what is tahor . . . Therefore, its reward is in Olam HaBa . . . for the magnificent light they saw is the light that was created on the first day that HKB"H stored for those who labor in the study of Torah she'b'al peh day and night.

The Torah Scholars in Bavel Became Adversaries in order to Clarify the Halachah amidst the Darkness

Based on what we have learned, we can better appreciate the elucidation in the Gemara above comparing the study of Torah in Bavel to the study of Torah in Eretz Yisrael from the passuk in Zechariah: **"אקח לי שני מקלות, לאחד קראתי נועם ולאחד קראתי חובלים, נועם אלו תלמידי חכמים שבארץ ישראל שמונעים מן זה לזה בהלכה, חובלים אלו תלמידי חכמים שבבבל שמחבלים זה לזה בהלכה."** **"And I took for myself two staffs, one I called 'gracious' and one I called 'assaulters'?"** 'Gracious' represents the Torah scholars of Eretz Yisrael, who are gracious towards one another in matters of halachah. 'Assaulters' represents the Torah scholars of Bavel, who assault each other in matters of halachah.

Let us explain. The sages of Eretz Yisrael did not have to argue with each other extensively in order to clarify the halachah based on the tenets of the Torah; because the kedushah and the very air of Eretz Yisrael assisted them and contributed to their success. The sages of Bavel, however, learning in an environment compared to darkness--**"במחשכים הושיבני"**—didn't have it that easy. They had to

dispute one another and become adversarial in order to reach a correct and true halachic decision. In the words of the Gemara cited above: **"אפילו האב ובנו הרב ותלמידו שעוסקין בתורה בשער אחד, נעשים אויבים זה את זה, ואינם זזים משם עד שנעשים אוהבים זה את זה, שנאמר את והב בסופה"**—even a father and son, a Rabbi and his pupil, they fought relentlessly like enemies until arriving at a satisfactory, harmonious conclusion.

We can also better appreciate the Rivash's explanation of the statements made by the two prominent Babylonian scholars—Abaye and Rava. Abaye claimed that one scholar from Eretz Yisrael was the equal of two from Bavel due to the kedushah of his location: **"אורא"** דארץ ישראל מחכים. Then Rava added that one scholar from Bavel who went up to Eretz Yisrael became as great as two of their scholars.

Seeing as this scholar was nurtured on the Torah of Bavel—a place representing darkness: **"במחשכים הושיבני כמתי עולם"**—he had to labor and debate Torah issues extensively in order to reveal the light of the Torah concealed within the darkness of galut. Upon going up to Eretz Yisrael, he benefitted from the divine assistance associated with the kedushah of the land. Hence, he now had two advantages on his side working together—the kedushah of Eretz Yisrael and the intense, relentless methodology he had acquired in Bavel. As we know, two working in concert are superior to one alone; thus, this scholar from Bavel was now considered the equal of two from Eretz Yisrael.

Torah Scholars in Bavel Beat Their Garments to Release the Hostility that Had Formed between Them

We can now rejoice; for, we can now decipher our sages' enigmatic statement concerning Rav Huna's students: **"כי הוו קיימי רבנן ממתכתא דרב הונא ונפצי גלימיהו, הוה סליק אבאקא וכסי ליה ליומא, ואמרי רבנן ממתכתא דרב הונא ונפצי גלימיהו, קמו ליה ממתכתא דרב הונא ככלאי"**—at the end of his shiur, Rav Huna's students would stand up and brush the dust off of their garments. The dust alludes to the animosity that had developed among these Babylonian Torah-scholars. Recall that this is why the navi referred to them as **"חובלים"**. For, as the Gemara explains, they assaulted one another in matters of halachah.

Yet, the Gemara assures us: **"ואינם זזים משם עד שנעשים אוהבים זה את זה, שנאמר את והב בסופה"**—they did not move away until they had made peace with one another. Therefore, at the conclusion of their studies, the Torah-scholars of Bavel rose from their places. In other words, they abandoned the hatred and hostility that had developed between them in the course of their vehement halachic debates; and they brushed away the dust—the hatred and hostility—that had stuck to their garments during their studies by becoming devoted friends once again.

Therefore, Chazal teach us that Hashem valued this dust so much that it rose and obscured the brightness of the sun's illumination. For, without their heated debates, they would not have succeeded in arriving at the correct, Torah-based, halachic decision. This is why Chazal proceed to inform us that even in Eretz Yisrael—where they were more pleasant toward one another while clarifying halachic issues—they were inspired by the dust generated by the Torah of the Babylonian scholars. Witnessing the phenomenon caused them to remark: **“קמו ליה ממתבתא דרב הונא בבלי”**. In other words, Rav Huna's students have risen from their place, in the merit of their extensive debates during their halachic disputes.

This explains very nicely the interpretation presented in the name of the Maharal of Prague, zy”a. According to the Maharal, clouds were formed from the dust that rose from the garments of the Babylonian Torah-scholars; those clouds hid the light of the sun; those clouds provided rainfall in Eretz Yisrael. This prompted the residents of Eretz Yisrael to remark: **“קמו ליה ממתבתא דרב הונא בבלי”**—because they appreciated the fact that the rains falling in Eretz Yisrael were the result of the Babylonian's Torah-study. As explained, the residents of Bavel lacked the merit of Eretz Yisrael; consequently, they had to work much harder in their study of Torah than their counterparts in Eretz Yisrael; their considerable efforts generated clouds that provided rain in Eretz Yisrael.

The Two Mountains Joined Together

Continuing onward along this exalted path, let us address the great miracle that occurred involving the two mountains. One mountain was located in the territory of Moav; the Emorim hid in the crevices of that mountain. The other mountain was located in Eretz Yisrael. When the two mountains merged, the Emorim were crushed between them. For, forty years, Yisrael wandered in the midbar, which is outside the confines of Eretz Yisrael; thus, they were forced to labor and exert great effort in their Torah-study. For, at that point in time, they still lacked the merit of the Torah of Eretz Yisrael.

This is especially true in light of the fact that the midbar is the domain of the klipos. The Arizal explains this fact as follows: **“הנה—מקום הקליפה עצמה נקרא מדבר שמם, כי איננו ראוי כלל לשוב ולא לזריעה—the place of the klipah itself is called a desolate “midbar” (wilderness), because it is not fitting at all for settling or for planting.** This is the message of the passuk (Devarim 32, 10): **“מצאנו בארץ מדבר ובתוהו ילל ישימון”**—He found him in a desert (“midbar”) land, and in the wastes of a howling wilderness. Rashi comments: **“ארץ ציה ושוממה מקום יללת תנינים ובנות יענה, אף שם”**

“נמשכו אחר האמונה—a land of parchedness and desolation, a place of the howling wilderness-animals and wilderness-birds; even there, they were drawn by emunah. In other words, even in a place ruled by the klipos, they believed wholeheartedly in Hashem. Therefore, they were forced to exert themselves in the study of Torah in order to drive away the spiritual darkness of the klipos, as depicted by the words: **“במחשכים הושיבני כמתי עולם”**.

So, when Yisrael reached the plains of Moav, which are adjacent to the boundary of Eretz Yisrael, they made preparations to enter the land. For, soon they would have the privilege of engaging in the Torah-study of Eretz Yisrael. Now, we have learned from Rava's statement: **“וחד מינן כי סליק להתם, עדיף כתי מינייהו”**. When Torah-scholars from outside Eretz Yisrael ascend to Eretz Yisrael, they possess two virtues. Therefore, the mountain from Eretz Yisrael uprooted itself, went out to greet them and joined with the mountain in Moav. As a result, the Emorim hiding in the mountain of Moav in order to ambush and kill Yisrael were physically crushed.

We can now appreciate the amazing connection between the two interpretations of the phrase: **“את והב בסופה”**. Firstly, it alludes to the miraculous merging of the two mountains to crush the Emorim. Secondly, the Gemara provides the following elucidation: **“אפילו האב ובנו, הרב ותלמידו, שעוסקין בתורה בשער אחד, נעשים אויבים זה את זה, ואינם זזים משם עד שנעשים אוהבים זה את זה, שנאמר את והב בסופה”**. For, when Yisrael studied Torah in the “midbar”—which is outside the confines of Eretz Yisrael—they became hostile towards one another in order to clarify the correct halachic decision based on the tenets of the Torah. This is consistent with Rashi's comment concerning their encampment at Matan Torah (Shemos 19, 2): **“ויחן שם ישראל, כאיש אחד בלב אחד, אבל שאר כל החניות בתרעומות ובמחלוקת”**—**“and Yisrael encamped there,” as one man, with one heart; but all the other encampments involved complaints and argumentation.**

Yet, when they arrived at the boundary of Eretz Yisrael and were prepared to enter the land, they knew that they would study Torah in the land in a more pleasant, harmonious manner. Therefore, they made peace with one another and became devoted friends, in keeping with the second interpretation of the words: **“את והב בסופה”**. In this merit, the mountain located in Eretz Yisrael went out to greet them, like a maidservant going out to greet her master. Then it merged with the mountain in Moav, outside of Eretz Yisrael, alluding to the merging of the two methodologies of Torah-study—that of Eretz Yisrael and that of Bavel; and they crushed the Emorim between them. Thus, the two interpretations of the phrase: **“את והב בסופה”** coincide quite beautifully and convey a similar message.

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