

## How to Agree to Disagree

### Exodus, Chapter 19

1. *In the third month* of the children of Israel's departure from Egypt, on this day they arrived *in the desert of Sinai*.
2. They journeyed from Rephidim, and they arrived *in the desert of Sinai*, and they encamped in the desert, *and Israel encamped there opposite the mountain...*
10. And the L-rd said to Moses, "Go to the people and prepare them today and tomorrow, and they shall wash their garments.
11. And they shall be prepared for the third day, for on the third day, the L-rd will descend before the eyes of all the people upon Mount Sinai.
12. And you shall set boundaries for the people around...

### Exodus, Chapter 19

1. G-d spoke all these words, to respond:
2. "I am the L-rd, your G-d..."

*In the third month*

#### The Rebbe

The Torah was given specifically in the third month for the number three symbolizes the threefold unity the Torah creates. *One* represents that there is no separate entity to disagree, but is an inherent, not created, unity. *Two* signifies duality, discord and separation. *Three* introduces a new element that reconciles the discordant concepts. It does not choose one way or the other, for that would be returning to one. Rather it blends the two, it allows each its own individuality and yet enables them at the same time to fuse into a greater whole. The Torah allows humans to exist as finite beings and still attain a level of Divine consciousness. It does not superimpose one reality over another, but melds the two into a G-dly and meaningful existence within our physical world.

*In the desert of Sinai*

#### Torah Or

The parched desert is a metaphor for the thirst for G-dliness the people felt. Thirst for G-dliness is always accompanied by a corresponding healthy disdain for the material world. Sinai, hatred, alludes to their heightened disdain for the allure of materialism.

#### Mechilta D'Rashbi

The Torah given in the ownerless wilderness. For if it were given in the Land of Israel, the residents of the Land of Israel would say, "It is ours"; and if it were given in some other place, the residents of that place would say, "It is ours." Therefore it was given in the wilderness. Anyone who wishes to acquire it may.

#### Eiruvin 54a

The Torah was given in the wilderness to teach us that if a person humbles himself like the wilderness, which everybody treads upon, then the Torah is given to him as a gift.

*And Israel encamped there*

#### Rashi

At all their other encampments, the verse says *vayachanu* ("and they camped," in the plural); here it says *vayichan* ("and he camped," in the singular). For all other encampments were in argument and dissent, whereas here they camped as one man, with one heart.



#### פרק יט

א. בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְּבַר סִינַי: ב. נִיסְעוּ מִרְפִּידִים וַיָּבֹאוּ מִדְּבַר סִינַי

וַיַּחֲנוּ בַּמִּדְבָּר וַיַּחֲזֵן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶד הַהָר:

י. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵךְ אֶל הָעָם וְקִדְשְׁתָּם הַיּוֹם וּמָחָר וּבִבְסוּ שְׂמֹלֹתָם: יא. וְהָיוּ נֹכְחִים לַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי כִּי בַיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי יֵרֵד ה' לְעֵינֵי כָל הָעָם עַל הַר סִינַי: יב. וְהִגְבַּלְתָּ אֶת הָעָם סָבִיב לְאָמֹר הַשְּׁמֵרוּ לְכֶם עֲלוֹת בְּהָר וּנְגַע בְּקַצְהוּ כָּל הַנֶּגַע בְּהָר מוֹת יוֹמָת:

#### פרק כ

א. וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לְאָמֹר:

ב. אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ ...

*Desert of Sinai...opposite the mountain*

## **The Rebbe**

G-d chose to give the Torah on a mountain which expresses the ideal of elevating the physical world. A mountain is made of the same earth as a plane, but has been raised upward. It demonstrates how even lifeless dirt can be elevated to the highest levels.

Mount Sinai was a low, unimposing mountain to teach us that the gateway to Torah is humility. On the other hand, the fact that the Torah was given on a mountain teaches us that humility must be complemented by self-assurance. The self assurance can never degenerate into arrogance, so the Torah warned us to encamp "facing the mountain" and G-d told us to "make a boundary around the mountain". The Jews united at Mt. Sinai because they were "facing the mountain". G-d created us as individuals, very different from one another. Only if we are "facing the mountain", totally devoid of ego and focused in anticipation on receiving G-d's word do our petty differences pale and our common devotion to G-d's will transforms these differences to accept our collective mission.

*"I am the L-rd, your G-d"*

## **Zohar**

The Ten Commandments had to be addressed to the Jewish people as a collective whole (in singular) for if even one Jew was missing, the Torah could not have been given.

## **Ramban**

The Ten Commandments were addressed to each Jew as individuals. Each received it in a unique personal way, tailored to his spiritual and psychological makeup.

## **Shabbat 105 a**

*Anochi, I*, is an acronym for the phrase, "I have written and bestowed My very self" and refers to G-d's ineffable essence (which cannot be referred to by any Name.)

## **The Rebbe**

When the essence of G-d is revealed, the barriers between antithetical aspects of reality harmonize as physical existence becomes a vessel for holiness. The human bickering and pettiness, too, crumbles in the realization of our common, loftier mission that overrides our personal agendas.

## **Mishneh Torah**

The Torah was given to bring peace into the world.

## SUMMARY

Prerequisites for tolerance:

- See yourself as a "three." We do not all need to be exact and conform as "ones", nor fight in discord as "twos". Find the third dimension that appreciates a world full of possibilities.
- G-d provides each of us with the resources, talents and strengths that we require to fulfill our unique mission in life. We each have a unique role to play.
- The gateway to tolerance is humility, the ability to make room for another; but humility must be tempered with healthy and guarded self-assurance.
- Our relationship towards others must be predicated on our belief in G-d or it may be swayed by self love. G-d's revelation creates a harmony between all antithetical aspects of reality.

