



PARSHAS VAYEILECH – GERSHON HEPNER

Over the last few years, our Kehilla has been treated to no fewer than three, brand-new beautiful Sifrei Torah. They are the result of incredible generosity on the part of certain individuals, and also of the Kehilla in general. As we all benefit from these new additions to the Shul, it seems appropriate to focus on the Mitzva in this week's Sedra to write a Sefer Torah.

The 613th and final Mitzva – that of writing a Sefer Torah – was given to Moshe on the last day of his life. The Medrash tells us that on this on this day, Moshe wrote not just one, but a total of thirteen Sifrei Torah! He presented one Sefer Torah to his own tribe of Levi, and it was placed in storage with the Aron, so that it should serve as a prototype for all future Sifrei Torah. The others were presented to the remaining tribes.

The wording of the Mitzva is somewhat baffling:

ועתה כתבו לכם את השירה הזאת ולמדה את בני ישראל שימה בפייהם

“And now, write for yourselves this song, and teach it to the children of Yisroel, place it in their mouth...” (31:19)

At first glance, the phrase *“this song”* seems to be a reference to the Song of Haazinu, which follows on directly from this week's Sedra. How strange to refer to the Torah as *“this song”*!?

The Rambam (Hilchos Sefer Torah [7,1]) explains that since we may not write fragmentary extracts of the Torah, we are commanded to write the Song of Haazinu, incorporated into the entire written Torah. Hence the Mitzva is to write the Torah scroll in its completed form.

The Rosh (beginning of Hilchos Sefer Torah) comments that we see from the possuk that the primary purpose in writing a Sefer Torah is in order to *“teach it to the children of Yisroel”*. Way back in our history, a Sefer Torah would be used as we might nowadays use a Chumash, namely for *learning* Torah. Now that the main function of a Sefer Torah is for *leining* in Shul, the Mitzva of writing a Sefer Torah may be performed by writing and obtaining seforim that will be used for *learning* Torah. The Rosh explains that the Mitzva of writing a Sefer Torah could be accomplished nowadays by producing Chumoshim, Mishnayos and Gemoros – all of which are used for the study of Torah.

I saw quoted in the name of the Sefer She'eiris Chaim, that the possuk contains an allusion to this opinion of the Rosh. The opening word of the possuk *“Ve'Ato”* – *“And now...”* can be understood to imply *“And now – during the period of history that Torah is learnt directly from a Sefer Torah – there is a Mitzva to write a Sefer Torah.”* During later periods, when Torah She'Be'Al Peh will be committed to a written form, the Mitzva will be extended to the production of seforim as we now know them.

The Sefer Tosefes Brocho gives a wonderful explanation as to why the Torah is described as *“this song”*. The world of Halocho is replete with machlokes. We are accustomed to differing opinions between Tano'im, Amoro'im, Rishonim and Acharonim, right down to our present day Gedolim. The Gemoro (Eruvin 13b) tells us that a Heavenly Voice describes each machlokes as *“Eilu Ve'Eilu Divrei Elokim Chaim”* – both opinions are the Words of the Living G-d. How can this be? The final Halocho will follow one opinion only, so how can both be described as the Words of HaKodosh Boruch Hu? The Sefer Tosefes Brocho explains that the Torah is likened to a complex piece of orchestral music. Different instruments with vastly different timbres simultaneously play different melodies, harmonies and counter melodies. It is the resultant combination of sound that gives the music its rich texture, depth and beauty. So it is with Torah – each opinion in a machlokes is different line of Divine Music, and stems from On High. The blend of opinions is Hashem's *“song”* – His Symphony of Torah study.