

B”H

Borders Built of Roses

Why Do the Borders Around Mt. Sinai Occupy Such a Major Part of the Story?

By Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson

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Dedicated by **David** and **Eda Schottenstein**  
in the loving memory of  
Rabbi **Gavriel Noach** and **Rivki Holtzberg**  
And all of the **Mumbai Kedoshim**

And in the loving memory of a young soul  
**Alta Shula Swerdlov**  
Daughter of Rabbi **Yossi** and **Hindel Swerdlov**

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Accompanying Curriculum:

1. Sources
2. Questions and Exercises

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### 1. Sources:

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| <p><b>1. Yisro</b><br/><b>19:12</b></p> <p>12. And you shall set boundaries for the people around, saying, Beware of ascending the mountain or touching its edge; whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death.'</p> <p>13. No hand shall touch it, for he shall be stoned or cast down; whether man or beast, he shall not live. When the ram's horn sounds a long, drawn out blast, they may ascend the mountain."</p> <p>20. The Lord descended upon Mount Sinai, to the peak of the mountain, and the Lord summoned Moses to the</p> | <p><b>1. יתרו</b><br/><b>יט, יב</b></p> <p>יב וְהִגַּבְלֹתָ אֶת-הָעָם סָבִיב לְאֹמֶר, הִשְׁמְרוּ לְכֶם<br/>עֲלוֹת בְּהָר וְנִגַע בְּקֶצְהוּ: כָּל-הַנִּגַּע בְּהָר, מוֹת<br/>יוֹמָת.</p> <p>יג לֹא-תִגַּע בּוֹ יָד, כִּי-סָקוּל יִסְקַל אוֹ-יָרֵה יִיָּרֶה-<br/>אִם-בְּהֵמָה אִם-אִישׁ, לֹא יִחִיָּה; בְּמִשְׁךְ, הַיָּבֵל,<br/>הַמָּה, יַעֲלוּ בְּהָר...<br/><br/>כ וַיֵּרָד ה' עַל-הַר סִינַי, אֶל-רֹאשׁ הָהָר; וַיִּקְרָא</p> |
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| <p>peak of the mountain, and Moses ascended.<br/>                 21. The Lord said to Moses, "Go down, warn the people lest they break [their formation to go nearer] to the Lord, and many of them will fall.<br/>                 22. And also, the priests who go near to the Lord shall prepare themselves, lest the Lord wreak destruction upon them."<br/>                 23. And Moses said to the Lord, "The people cannot ascend to Mount Sinai, for You warned us saying, Set boundaries for the mountain and sanctify it.' "<br/>                 24. But the Lord said to him, "Go, descend, and [then] you shall ascend, and Aaron with you, but the priests and the populace shall not break [their formation] to ascend to the Lord, lest He wreak destruction upon them."<br/>                 25. So Moses went down to the people and said [this] to them.</p> <p><b>20:1</b></p> <p>1. God spoke all these words, to respond:</p> | <p>ה' לְמֹשֶׁה אֶל-רֹאשׁ הָהָר, וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה.<br/>                 כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמַר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה, רֵד הַעֵד בָּעָם: פֶּן-יִהְרָסוּ אֶל-ה' לְרֹאוֹת, וַיִּפְּלוּ מִמֶּנּוּ רַב.<br/>                 כַּבְּנֵי הַכֹּהֲנִים הַנִּגְשִׁים אֶל-ה', יִתְקַדְּשׁוּ: פֶּן-יִפְרָץ בָּהֶם, ה'.<br/>                 כַּגֵּן אֶל-ה' אָמַר מֹשֶׁה, אֶל-ה', לֹא-יִוָּכַל הָעָם, לָעֲלֹת אֶל-הַר סִינַי: כִּי-אַתָּה הִעַדְתָּה בְּנֹו, לֵאמֹר, הִגְבַּל אֶת-הָהָר, וְקִדְּשָׁתוּ.<br/>                 כַּד אָמַר אֱלֹו ה' לְךָ-רֵד, וְעֲלִית אִתָּה וְאַהֲרֹן עִמָּךְ; וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהָעָם, אֶל-יִהְרָסוּ לָעֲלֹת אֶל-ה'-פֶּן-יִפְרָץ-בָּם.<br/>                 כֹּה וַיֵּרַד מֹשֶׁה, אֶל-הָעָם; וַיֹּאמֶר, אֲלֵהֶם.</p> <p>כ, א</p> <p>וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹו-יָם, אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לְאֹמְרֵם.</p> |
| <p><b>2. Rashi</b><br/>                 Yisro 19:24</p> <p><b>'Go, descend'</b>: And warn them a second time. We admonish a person before the act [he is to perform], and we admonish him again at the time of the act [when it is to be performed].</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p><b>2. רש"י</b><br/>                 יתרו יט, כד</p> <p><b>לך רד</b>: והעד בהם שנית, שמזרזין את האדם קודם מעשה, וחוזרין ומזרזין אותו בשעת מעשה:</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p><b>3. Mishpatim</b><br/>                 22:4</p> <p>4. If a man leads his animals into a field or a vineyard, or lets his animal loose and it eats in another's field...</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p><b>3. משפטים</b><br/>                 כב, ד</p> <p>כִּי יִבְעַר-אִישׁ, שְׂדֵה אוֹ-כַרְם, וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת-בְּעִירָהּ, וּבְעַר בְּשָׂדֵה אֲחֵר...<br/>                 ...</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p><b>4. Song of Songs</b><br/>                 7:3</p> <p>3. Your navel is [like] a round basin, where no mixed wine is lacking; your belly is [like] a stack of wheat, fenced in with roses.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p><b>4. שיר השירים</b><br/>                 ז, ג</p> <p>שְׁרָרֵךְ אֲגֹן הַסֹּהַר אֵל יַחְסֹר הַמְּזֹג בְּטֹגֵךְ עֲרֹמַת חֲטִיִּים סוּגָה בְּשׁוֹשַׁנִּים.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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| <p><b>5. Midrash Rabbah</b><br/><b>Song of Songs</b></p> <p>‘A stack of wheat (chitim)’ refers to a stack of sins (chatoim). ‘Fenced in with roses’ refers to words of Torah which are as soft as roses.</p> <p>How many Mitzvos and details are there in the Laws in the halachik worg of “Toras Kohanim!” There are so many details, smaller and larger how a sacrifice may become invalid!</p> <p>R. Levi said: When a Jewish man marries a woman, at the age of 30 or 40, he spends much money on the wedding and finally wants to consummate the marriage. She tells him ‘I saw an emission of [menstrual] blood as red as a rose,’ and he will immediately physically separate from her [as the law of family purity requires]. Who caused him to separate? Is there a wall of iron between them? Is there a steel pillar? Did a snake threaten to bite him? A scorpion? Why will he not approach her? It is only the words of Torah which are as soft as a rose, and it is written (Leviticus 18) “Do not approach a woman in the uncleanness of her period.”</p> <p>Likewise if one is brought a dish of meat, but then is told ‘forbidden fats fell into this’ and he refrains and does not eat it, who caused him to do this? Did a snake threaten to bite him? A scorpion prevent him from eating it? No! It is only the words of Torah which are as soft as roses, and it is written (Leviticus 3) “Do not eat fats or blood.”</p> | <p><b>5. מדרש רבה</b><br/><b>שיר השירים</b></p> <p>‘ערמת חטים’ ערמת של חטאים. ‘סוגה בשושנים’ אלו ד”ת שהן רכים כשושנים.</p> <p>כמה מצות ודקדוקים יש בתורת כהנים! כמה קלין וחמורין פיגולין ונותרות יש בתורת כהנים?!</p> <p>א”ר לוי, בנוהג שבעולם אדם נושא אשה בן ל’ שנה בן מ’ שנה משמוציא יציאותיו הוא בא לזקק לה, והיא אומרת לו כשושנה אדומה ראיתי ופורש ממנה מיד. מי גרם לו שלא יקרב לה? איזה כותל ברזל יש ביניהם? ואיזה עמוד ברזל ביניהם? אי זה נחש נשכו? איזה עקרב עקצו שלא יקרב לה? דברי תורה שרכין כשושנה! שנא’ בה (ויקרא י”ח) ואל אשה בנדת טומאתה לא תקרב.</p> <p>וכן מי שהביאו לו תמחוי של חתיכות, אמרו לו חלב נפל שם, ומשך ידו ולא טעמו. מי גרם לו שלא לטעום? איזה נחש נשכו שלא יטעום? ואיזה עקרב עקצו שלא יקרב ויטעם אותו? דברי תורה שרכין כשושנה! שכתוב בה (ויקרא ג’) כל חלב וכל דם לא תאכלו.</p> |
| <p><b>6. Talmud Gittin</b><br/><b>13a</b></p> <p>A slave wants anarchy; he craves crassness, instant gratification, and promiscuity.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <p><b>6. גיטין</b><br/><b>יג, א</b></p> <p>עבדא בהפקירא ניחא ליה זילא ליה שכיחא ליה פריצה ליה.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <p><b>7. Tzafnas Paneach</b><br/><b>Yisro 19:23</b></p> <p><b>The nation cannot ascend [the mountain].</b> Moses means to say, that at the time of the giving of the Torah, the evil inclination was uprooted from their hearts, hence they cannot do that which is forbidden to them. It is thus naturally impossible for them to ascend</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p><b>7. צפנת פענח</b><br/><b>יתרו יט, כג</b></p> <p><b>לא יוכל העם לעלות</b> – רצונו לומר, דהא מבואר בע”ז דף ה’, דנעקר יצר הרע מלבם, ורצונו לומר כך, דכל דבר שאסור אי אפשר</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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| <p>the mountain [after G-d prohibited this]... Because Moses did not that they would eventually sin.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>להם לעשות כלל ולא יוכלו כלל בגדר טבע לילך לשם . . דמשה לא ידע שהם עתידים לחטא.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>9. Tosefta</b><br/><b>Bava Kama 7:3</b></p> <p>When the Jews stood before Mount Sinai, they attempted to 'cheat' G-d's supernal knowledge, as it says, (Exodus 24) "All that G-s has spoken, we will fulfill, and adhere to" and this is as if they lied to Him! Therefore it is written (Deuteronomy 5) [G-d says] "If only their hearts be like this: to fear Me etc." And if you say that G-d did not know that they would eventually sin, it is written (Psalms 78) "And they beguiled Him with their mouth, and with their tongues they lied to Him, their hearts were not sincere." Nevertheless, (Psalms ibid) "He is merciful and forgiving of sin," and it is written (Proverbs 26) "Burning lips and a wicked heart are like silver overlaid with earthenware."</p> | <p><b>9. תוספתא</b><br/>ב"ק, פרק ז הלכה ג</p> <p>... וכן מצינו כשהיו ישראל עומדין לפני הר סיני, בקשו לגנוב דעת העליונה, שנאמר (שמות כד) כל אשר דבר ה' נעשה ונשמע, כביכול נגנב הוא להם, תלמוד לומר (דברים ה) מי יתן והיה לבבם זה להם ליראה אותי וגו', א"ת שאין הכל גלוי לפניו והלא כבר נאמר (תהילים עח) ויפתוהו בפיהם ובלשונם יזבו לו ולבם לא נכון עמו ולא נאמנו בבריתו, אעפ"כ (שם) והוא רחום יכפר עון וגו', ואומר (משלי כו) כסף סיגים מצופה על חרש שפתים חלקים ולב רע.</p> |
| <p><b>8. Or Hachaim</b><br/><b>Parshat Acharei</b></p> <p>The extreme love of G-d that the righteous Tzadikim posses is such, that even as they sense their own death approaching, they do not hold back from cleaving to G-d with sweetness, pleasantness, friendship, cherishing, desire and sweetness until the moment that their soul actually expires...</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p><b>8. אור החיים</b><br/>ר"פ אחרי</p> <p>הפלאת חיבת הצדיקים שהגם שהיו מרגישים במיתתם, לא נמנעו מקרוב לדביקות נעימות עריבות ידידות חביבות חשיקות מתיקות עד כלות נפשותם מהם.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

**מקורות:**

צפנת פענח להגאון הרצובי פ' יתרו יט, כג.

שיחת ג' סיון תשמ"ט, לכ"ק אדמו"ר מליובאוויטש.

"דרשות און כתבים", להגרי"ד סולובייציק, שבת הגדול תשי"ז.

B”H

## 2. Questions and Exercises

1. G-d cautions **three** times, “Do not cross the boundary blockading Mt. Sinai.” Why do the borders around Mt. Sinai occupy such a major part of the story?
2. Do you have absolute boundaries in your life? Do you sometimes cross your own boundaries?
3. How do we teach our youth about “borders?”
4. According to the Ragatchover Gaon, what were the two differing perspectives of Moses and G-d?
5. Is Judaism about imposing borders on life, or is it about transcending borders?