

Jewish Grandparents Network Power of Revelation

Shemot Rabbah 5:9

Havruta Learning Experience

Text and Guide

The Power of Revelation: Each According to Their Strength

The following text describes the ways in which Torah, at the moment of revelation, was accessible to each and every person receiving it. This is a text from *Shemot Rabbah*, a midrash on the book of Exodus.

Shemot Rabbah 5:9

בוא וראה היאך הקול יוצא,
אצל כל ישראל כל אחד ואחד לפי כחו,
הזקנים לפי כחן,
הבחורים לפי כחן,
הקטנים לפי כחן,
והיונקים לפי כחן,
והנשים לפי כחן,

ואף משה לפי כחו, שנאמר (שמות יט,
יט): משה ידבר והאלהים יענו בקול,
בקול שהיה יכול לסבול.

וכן הוא אומר (תהלים כט, ד): קול ה'
בכח, בכחו לא נאמר אלא בכח, בכחו של
כל אחד ואחד,

ואף נשים מעברות לפי כחן,

הני אומר כל אחד ואחד לפי כחו.

A Come and see how the *kol*¹ goes out,
to all of Israel, each according to their strength (*koach*)².
The elders according to their strength,
The youth according to their strength,
The children according to their strength,
The infants according to their strength,
And the women according to their strength.

B And even Moses according to his strength, as it says, (Exodus 19:19—see below): Moses would speak and God would answer him with *kol*—with a *kol* that he could bear.

C And so too it says, (Psalms 29:4—see below): “The *kol* of God is powerful.” (Lit. “through strength” (*koach*)). It did not say “Through God’s strength,” rather “through strength.” Through the strength of each and every person.

D And even the pregnant women according to their strength,

E That is to say, everyone according to their strength.

Biblical Quotations in Context

Exodus 19:18-20

והר סיני עשן כלֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר יָרַד עָלָיו ה' בָּאֵשׁ
וַיַּעַל עֲשָׁנו כַּעֲשַׁן הַכִּבְשָׁן וַיִּחַרְדּוּ כָּל־הָהָר מֵאֵד:
וַיְהִי קוֹל הַשֹּׁפָר הוֹלֵךְ וְחֹזֵק מֵאֵד מִשָּׁה יִדְבֹר וְהָאֱ-
לֹהִים יַעֲנֶנּוּ בְּקוֹל:

18 Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for God had come down upon it in fire; the smoke rose like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled violently.

19 The blare of the horn grew louder and louder. As Moses spoke, God answered him in thunder.

20 God came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain, and God called Moses to the top of the mountain and Moses went up.

Psalms 29:3-5

קוֹל ה' עַל־הַמַּיִם אֱלֹהֵי־הַכְּבוֹד הִרְעִים ה' עַל־מַיִם
רַבִּים:

קוֹל־ה' בְּכַחַּת קוֹל ה' בְּהָדָר:

קוֹל ה' שִׁבַּר אֲרָזִים וַיִּשְׁבֹּר ה' אֶת־אֲרָזֵי הַלְבָּנוֹן:

3 The *kol* of the lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters.

4 The *kol* of the Lord is powerful. The *kol* of the Lord is full of majesty.

5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.

¹ *kol* = voice, thunder, blare, sound

² *koach* = strength, power, might, ability, vigor

GREET YOUR PARTNER(S)

- 1 Take a couple of minutes to say hello and catch up socially.

NOTICE AND DISCOVER

- 2 Take turns reading a section of the text aloud.

After each section is read, each person in the group should share something they notice or wonder about in the text. *I notice... I wonder...*

You may also choose to read and explore the quotations the rabbis refer to in the text, provided below the Shemot Rabbah text.

DEEPER INVESTIGATION

- 3 Reread the text as a whole now that you have helped one another notice its details and have raised some questions.

4 Explore: **How does this text contribute to your understanding of the giving and receiving of Torah that we celebrate on Shavuot? You may want to discuss some of the following questions:**

- This text lists specific groups of people who received Torah. What do you think is the significance of each of these groups and/or the list as a whole?
- What might "strength" mean in this text?
- What might it mean that even Moses received Torah according to his own strength?

REFLECT AND SHARE

- This text talks about people hearing "the voice" differently at different stages of life. Given where you are right now, what do you hear in this text that speaks to you the most?
- As a grandparent, what is one idea or question you want to take with you from this text into your own relationship with your grandchild or grandchildren?



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