

Parshas Devarim –Har Chermom, Panorama of Our Geulah
By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsch

There is a major mountain in northern Eretz Yisroel called Har Chermom which the Torah demarcates as the northern border of the lands on the eastern side of the Yarden River. Much space is devoted to the name of this mountain. In Devarim 3:8-9 the Torah states that the Tzidonim call the mountain Siryon, shield and the Emori call the mountain Snir, snow. Rashi explains that each nation fighting for control of this area wanted this mountain to be called by that nation's name. Rashi further points out, on this verse, that in Devarim 5:48 the mountain is called Sion, giving the mountain a total of four different names.

Most of the year Har Chermom is covered with snow and when the snow melts it becomes the source for the sea of Galilee. Now, as in ancient times, the melting snows of Har Chermom provide water for this area of Eretz Yisroel. Being a dry area, much of the farming depends on the water from this mountain as well. Below the snow line, there are many vineyards from which many of fine wines of Eretz Yisroel are produced. Pine and poplar trees are also plentiful in the area below the snowline. From a military perspective, the mountain is very important because of its height. From the top of the mountain, one gets an outstanding panoramic view of the area and is able to see an army approaching from very far away. Clearly, whoever controls this mountain controls the whole area so throughout history there has been much conflict over this mountain. Hence, the modern day conflict between Eretz Yisroel and Syria. Parts of the southern of the southern slopes of Har Chermom are within the Golan Heights that have been under Israeli control since 1967.

In Tehillim and in Shir Habsirim, Har Chermom is lauded for its pristine beauty as well as its being a place to get a birdseye view of Eretz Yisroel. In Tehillim 133:3 we read, 'like the dew of Chermom that descends on the mountains of Tzion, for there Hashem has commanded his bracha of life for evermore.' Without doubt, the thought of dew from Har Chermom gives one a picture of dew or pure, fresh sparkling streams from high mountaintops that are unspoiled by modern civilization. This verse also connects Har Chermom to the kedusha of Yerushalayim. From the verse, perhaps we can get this beautiful image of pure precious dew flowing gently from the pristine mountains in the north to the holier mountains of Yerushalayim. This can perhaps symbolize Torah coming from its pristine source in the higher worlds into our world. This can also be understood more broadly to mean the flow of bracha that flows purely and gently when we are worthy of it.

In Shir Hashirim 4:8 we read, 'you will come with me, you will see from the mountains of Amana, from the top of Snir and Chermom, from the dens of lions from

the mountains of leopards. Rashi, in Shir Hashirim, explains that the verse is Hakadosh Baruch Hu proclaiming to Am Yisroel that when the nation returns to its land, he is returning with them as he was also exiled. Clearly, when Am Yisroel was in exile, Hashem was in exile as well. Furthermore, see the reward for those who kept their faith which is symbolized by mountains of Amana, similar to emunah, faith in me throughout the years and centuries of exile. Rashi also says that there is a mountain named Amanh in the north which is Hor Habar which is designated as part of the northern border of Eretz Yisroel [Bamidbar 34:7] and when the exiled Jews are gathered they will see the beauty of Eretz Yisroel from there and rejoice.

The lions and leopards dens are references to Sichon and Og. Perhaps this is also part of why this parsha is always read on the Shabbos before Tisha B'Av, our day of mourning for the destruction of our Bais Hamikdash as well as the loss of our land and all of our glory. The Torah gives over a very powerful lesson for us in the details of the conquest of Sichon and Og's territories as well the details of Har Chermom. Just as in the days of Moshe Rabbeinu we had faith in Hashem and his promise to give us Eretz Yisroel and we attacked the most powerful domains of the area at the time without fear, so too, when our exile is over, we will fearlessly confront the most powerful nations in the world and their powerful armies and massive armaments. Surely, the very mention of Sichon and Og in their times made people freeze with fear with the image of giant, massive warriors commanding powerful armies and living in impregnable fortified cities. Is the feeling different today when we think of many of the military dictators of the Middle East also commanding powerful armies and the possibilities of possessing missiles, bombs and other weapons of mass destruction? Don't their names make the world shudder in fear? Yet, we are told right before Tisha B'av that if we maintain our faith in Hashem and his Torah, we will destroy all of these seemingly invincible military machines just as Am Yisroel did to Sichon and Og. We will then be able to stand from the tops of the mountains of the north of Eretz Yisroel and proudly proclaim to the nations of the world, 'This is our beloved whom we have kept our faith in throughout the centuries of our galus.'

I wish all of Klal Yisroel a meaningful Tisha B'av. Let us take the above mentioned ideas to heart and hopefully we will be worthy of the geulah and celebrate Tisha B'av as a Yom Tov celebrating the end of Our Galus.