

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

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וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲבְרוּ אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֵיךָ נָתַן לָךְ וְהִקְמַתָּ לָךְ אֲבָנִים גְּדוֹלוֹת וְשָׂדֶת אֹתָם בְּשִׂיד. וְכָתַבְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶן אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת בְּעֵבֶרְךָ... וְהָיָה בְּעֵבֶרְךָ אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן תִּקְיִמוּ אֶת הָאֲבָנִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מִצְוֶה אֶתְכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּהַר עֵיבֵל וְשָׂדֶת אֹתָם בְּשִׂיד... אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמוֹת תִּבְנֶה אֶת מִזְבֵּחַ ה'. ... (פרק כז' ב-ד-ו)

*It shall be on the day that you cross the Jordan to the land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you, you shall set up **great stones** and you shall coat **them** with plaster. You shall inscribe **on them** all the words of this Torah when you cross over... It shall be that when you cross the Jordan, you shall erect these stones, of which I command you today, on Mount Eival, and you shall coat **them** with plaster. ...From **whole stones** shall u build the altar of Hashem...*

Rav Meir Simcha begins his elucidation of our pasukim with a דוק דוק lesson: Is אֲבָנִים male or female gender? It appears to be both as we clearly see our pasukim going back and forth i.e., אֲבָנִים גְּדוֹלוֹת, אֲבָנִים שְׁלֵמוֹת, female-אֲבָנִים, male-וְשָׂדֶת אֹתָם. He sets the ground rules: if the reference is to the twelve stones *after* they were fashioned into one large one, then the Torah will describe the new, one stone in the male gender. If, however, the Torah is referring to them as separate stones, it will apply the female gender. So that according to Rav Meir Simcha, וְהִקְמַתָּ לָךְ אֲבָנִים, means that the stones were plastered together into one large one. Continuing with the pasuk, וְכָתַבְתָּ, means that the Torah should be written *on this one large stone*. It should therefore be וְכָתַבְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶם, why does the pasuk write עֲלֵיהֶן? Rav Meir Simcha believes that the pasuk is supporting the opinion of R' Shimon who in סוטה לה: tells us that the people wrote the text of the Torah on top of the plaster, and not on the stones themselves. עֲלֵיהֶן, in female gender, is telling them though that they should write in columns, similar to our Sefer Torah, and not across the width of the stone, so that if the plaster joining the stones should crack, there would not be an ענין/topic "divided" on two stones-an unacceptable כתב קטוע. Extremely practical advice!

Rav Meir Simcha continues: Rashi explains, based on גמרא סוטה לה: that the twelve stones were hewn into one *in* the Jordan River, after the waters miraculously split. Interestingly, Rav Meir Simcha points out, a simple reading of the pasukim is glaringly vague as to the particulars of building this stone structure. The notion that they were building it in the river is clearly absent from the narrative and is only added by Rashi. Rav Meir Simcha believes that the Torah did this intentionally and supports this with concepts that he presents repeatedly in his Sefer. He often refers us to the well-known Rambam in הלכות תשובה ה' ה' where "Rabbeinu Moshe" tells us that Hashem's foreknowledge of an event does not preclude Man's free will and in no way impedes a person's decision making: "...let it be known that the explanation for this is longer than the land and wider than the sea...and (in the end) we do not possess the ability to fully comprehend this..." In fact, in his sefer on Rambam, Ohr Sa'meach, Rav Meir Simcha

