

Afterthoughts **by Yocheved Bienenfeld**

KAFA ALEIHEM HAR K'GIGIT

In a shiur given by my husband a few years ago, he discussed this midrash about Gd lifting Mt. Sinai over the heads of the Jewish people like a barrel, basically 'forcing ' them to accept the Torah. He discussed the obvious problems associated with that statement: if the Jews said 'na'aseh v'nishma' {'we will do and we will listen'} before even hearing the commandments, how could we say Gd 'forced' them with 'har k'gigit'? And if there was force, how could the Jews be blamed for not keeping the Torah when they never really voluntarily accepted it? Many theories and explanations are offered and my husband presented many of them.

In the course of the shiur, I found myself actually visualizing ma'amad Har Sinai with and without this 'har k'gigit'. But this visualization was so constant that it reappeared to me a number of times much later that evening. Maybe this happened because the scene was a very pleasant one to me, and I think that was because of one of the explanations which spoke to me because it was a positive one. It's the one that explains the occurrence simply as the Jews not having bechira - free choice - not because of force, but through reality - it was a "no-brainer". How or why would they not accept the Torah after all Gd

had done for them, after seeing the revelation - as R' Yonatan ben Uziel put it "k'aspaklaria" - clear as glass? In addition, one of the explanations offered, actually said that this 'har k'gigit' was to shelter them from the intense heat of the midbar (desert).

The positive associations of 'har k'gigit' added a dimension to something in davening that always affected me. In the Shabbat morning davening, we include T'hilim 91 - Yosheiv b'seiter Elyon". Since on Shabbat I tend to have more kavana in davening than during the week because I take my time and focus more on what I'm actually saying, this mizmor usually moves me.

After expressing how one who lives in Gd's "shadow" can feel real bitachon in Him, the mizmor paints this picture of HaShem as the loving care and protection of a mother bird for her young: "He will cover you with His pinions and you will take refuge under His wings, His truth is His shield and armor."

There are times when I can imagine and feel these "wings" actually holding me around comforting and assuring me. So, after hearing the shiur on 'har k'gigit', I thought that maybe this picture of His covering us with His wings could also be describing this mountain experience, especially because His 'truth' is His shield; His emet is Torah. In other words, the Torah, which Gd is giving us, is the protection - the shield and armor

we need in life. As the Etz Yosef on t'fila says: He will cover and protect you... on condition that you will take cover under His wings. Whoever walks in the ways of His Torah, HaShem will be a shield and armor for him.}

[It's also interesting that this is one of the chapters of T'hilim that Moshe Rabbenu authored. Reading the Mt. Sinai experience into these words would not be such a stretch.]