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"And you shall be to Me a kingdom of princes and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the children of Israel" (*Shemot* 19:6).

When Hashem wanted to bring the Torah to the world and give it to its people, He went from nation to nation and offered them the Torah. When the people of each nation asked what is stated in the Torah, He enumerated the Ten Commandments. When they realized that the Torah obligates them, they refused Hashem's offer and rejected the Torah. In the end, Hashem approached Bnei Yisrael, and even though they were aware of all the limitations imposed in the Torah, which would restrict them, nevertheless, they chose to accept it and unanimously declared, as one man with one heart: "We shall do and we shall hear."

This is incredible, since at the time when Hashem brought the Torah to the world, the might of Hashem was evident to the world, and all the nations knew and recognized Hashem's exalted splendor. Especially during this period, the Ten Plagues still had an enormous impact, as well as the Exodus and the Splitting of the Sea, etc. Consequently, it was inevitable that everyone greatly feared Hashem and recognized His sovereignty in the world, as it is stated (*Shemot* 15:14), "Then the chieftains of Edom were confounded, trembling gripped the powers of Moav, all the dwellers of Canaan dissolved." So it is puzzling how the nations brazenly refused Hashem's offer to accept the Torah.

It seems that although the kingdom of Hashem in the world was clear and recognized clearly to all, just like a house testifies to the fact that it was built, and a garment testifies to its tailor, so too the nations knew deep inside that Hashem created the world and is its sole Master, and there is none other than Him. However, this was exactly the root of the problem. The nations recognized Hashem's sovereignty, but did not get moved by it. They knew it in their minds, but did not internalize it in their heart. Although, at first they were awed, the awe and excitement quickly cooled off and faded, because they did not bother to follow through and come witness Am Yisrael's miraculous existence in the desert.

The nations of that generation should not have sufficed with just hearing about the miracles that occurred to Bnei Yisrael, but they should have set out to the Wilderness to personally observe the Chosen Nation being led in an extraordinary manner. If indeed those nations would

MASKIL Le'David **Observing the Torah with Enthusiasm**



have bothered to personally witness the miraculous sight, certainly their knowledge would have affected their hearts and stirred their awe and excitement. In that case they surely would not have rejected Hashem's offer to receive the Torah.

Once, I went to visit a patient in a hospital in Yerushalayim who was saved from a terrible car accident. The wounded man told me that if there was anyone who sought to recognize and believe in Hashem, they should

come speak with him, because he saw death before his eyes, and only because of G-d in heaven, he was saved. After a while, I met the same person and asked him if in the wake of his miraculous salvation he had begun to lay tefillin, and he answered in the negative. Upon hearing his answer, I asked him: Only two days ago you told me that you would testify that there is a Master of the world. How then do you explain the fact that you do not obey what the Master commanded, especially after being miraculously saved through Divine Providence. The man could not answer me because he knew I was right.

There are similar cases in which people tell me that they lay tefillin only on Rosh Chodesh or on those days of the week when their Rabbi comes to lay tefillin for them. I always wonder, do those people also only eat on Rosh Chodesh? Are they handicapped to the extent that they cannot lay tefillin on their own, but need a Rabbi to come lay tefillin for them? I think the reason for this conduct stems from a lack of excitement and awe in the fulfillment of mitzvot. When it is convenient for them to perform the mitzvah, they do it. However, when the fulfillment causes them discomfort, then they easily permit themselves to abstain from performing it.

It is incumbent upon a person who experienced a miracle or Divine Providence to immediately express his enthusiasm in action, since the nature of man is to become accustomed to any situation to the extent that the even the most awesome excitement that he experienced can pass and disappear as quickly as it came. Therefore, one should make a concrete resolution immediately and be careful to carry through, because even if the excitement will pass, the resolution that the person made because of his experience has the potential to restore his original enthusiasm, and remind him of forgotten events so that he will ultimately fulfill the entire Torah with enthusiasm and zest.

20 Shevat 5783
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WORDS OF THE SAGES

The Sanctity Remains

"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...When the ram's horn sounds a long, drawn out blast, they may ascend the mountain" (Shemot 19:12-13).

At the time of Matan Torah, Mount Sinai was considered holy of holies, to the extent that anyone who would touch it was liable to die. However, immediately afterward, it is stated, "When the ram's horn sounds a long, drawn out blast, they may ascend the mountain." Even the animals were allowed to ascend the mountain, because the mountain held no sanctity in itself.

We need to clarify how it is possible that such a holy place where the Torah was given did not retain any of its sanctity. Why did it differ from the Beit Hamikdash, whose sanctity remains forever, even when it is no longer in existence?

Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, *zt"l*, the Mashgiach of Ponevezh Yeshiva, explained that it can be compared to a parchment on which one writes the Name of Hashem in sanctity, and thereby it acquires sanctity. The material matter is transformed and becomes consecrated. So too in the Beit Hamikdash, the sanctity permeated the material Temple, and therefore it is prohibited to enter the site of the Temple, which is punishable by *karet*. However, although there was a revelation on Mount Sinai, it did not permeate the physical site, so it remained void of sanctity.

Although Bnei Yisrael received a gift on Mount Sinai, a most exalted gift, the people did not have to toil or exert themselves for it on the mountain itself. On the contrary, only after receiving the Torah, they began to practice its laws. In contrast, Mount Moriah is symbolic of the service of Hashem since the time when Avraham Avinu prepared to sacrificed his son Yitzchak with great self-sacrifice, and in addition Avraham sacrificed offerings there, and he prayed and served Hashem with wholehearted dedication. This is what sanctified the holy site to be holy of holies, similar to the sanctity of those who toil in Torah.

It is told about Rabbi Yosef Buksbaum, the founder of "Mechon Yerushalayim," who was privileged to live in the same building as the great Torah scholar, the gaon of Tchebin, *zt"l*, on Iben Shaprut Street in Yerushalayim.

Shortly after the passing of the Rabbi of Tchebin, he once left his home and noticed the tzaddik Rabbi Aryeh Levine, *zt"l*, standing with a sefer Tehillim in his hand, reciting it while shedding copious tears. He was alarmed and asked him what was going on. Rabbi Aryeh Levine told him that one of his acquaintances was very sick and needed a miracle to save him. He looked for a place where he could pour his heart out in prayer.

In those years it was not possible to pray at the Kotel, because the Jordanians controlled East Jerusalem. Therefore, he decided that at this spot, near the consecrated building where the great Torah scholar had lived, a house in which he had toiled in Torah and spread Torah among all the Jews, and many broken hearted people had found solace in this place; this was a place worthy where his prayers would be answered.

When Rabbi Yosef related this to the *gaon* Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, *zt"l*, he responded that it was true that such sensitivity was characteristic only of Rabbi Aryeh, but he also testified about himself: "When I have chance to pass by the house of Rabbeinu, and I recall the privilege of having lived in his proximity, I feel entirely exalted."



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust
penned by Moreinu
v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David
Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

A Brilliant Portent

When I was a young boy, I used to watch Father, *zy"a*, light many lamps in cups of oil in memory of the tzaddikim, may their memories be blessed. Father would light untold amounts of these lights, to the extent that he would often say that if he had eye problems, it was surely due to the smoke that emanated from them. Nevertheless, he would scrupulously light the wicks with unbridled joy and deep concentration.

One day, Mr. Amram Ben-Chamou, *a"h*, came to visit precisely when Father was lighting the candles. Mr. Ben-Chamou explained that he suffered from heart problems. The doctors had informed him that if he suffered another heart attack, no matter how light, he would die.

"Does the number twenty-six, which is the numerical equivalent of Hashem's Name, **נָאָתָה**, find favor in your eyes?" asked Father.

"Yes!" answered Mr. Ben-Chamou.

"In that case, Hashem will add another twenty-six years to your life, in the merit of the tzaddikim for whom I am now lighting candles," was Father's blessing.

Mr. Ben-Chamou was pleased with these words and left with a spring in his step.

Twenty-six years came and went. Mr. Ben-Chamou was struck with a heart attack. His wife, who stood devotedly at his side, called me up to ask that I come and bless him with a complete recovery. I asked to speak with the sick man. He said to me, "I want you to know, honored Rav, that I am on the brink of death."

"Why do you talk like that?" I asked, surprised.

"Your father, *zy"a*, blessed me that I live another twenty-six years. This coming Monday completes twenty-six full years from the time of that blessing. I am sure that I will die then. Nothing can help."

That very Monday, he returned his soul to his Maker. I was left with the lesson of the greatness of tzaddikim, who are able to decree what will be. Hashem fulfills their decrees, in the merit of their attachment to Torah throughout their lives. Moreover, this tale teaches the significance of lighting candles in the memory of the tzaddikim of old.



FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings
of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik
Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita

Hashem and Yisrael are United in Marriage

"Moshe brought the people out toward G-d from the camp, and they stood at the bottom of the mountain" (*Shemot* 19:17).

Rashi comments: "At the bottom of the mountain" – According to its simple meaning, at the foot of the mountain. Its midrashic interpretation is, however, that the mountain was uprooted from its place and turned over them like a vat.

We need to clarify why Hashem turned the mountain like a vat over them. This signifies that since the Exodus, Bnei Yisrael and Hashem were in the process of getting married. When they left Egypt they left without food or drink. They were an enormous camp of several million people, including many women and children, and they relied on Hashem to feed them and provide them with sustenance, like a woman who relies entirely on her husband. This was the beginning of the marriage process between Hashem and Yisrael. Ultimately, they arrived at Mount Sinai where they entered the chuppah, and the chuppah was the mountain that was turned over them like a vat.

It is customary for the chattan to give his kallah a wedding gift, such as a wedding ring. Also Am Yisrael received a wedding gift from Hashem at the chuppah during their marriage on Mount Sinai, which is the holy Torah. It is the most magnificent and wonderful gift, both in this world and in the next. Its taste is sweet like honey, and there is nothing sweeter than it.

A kallah who receives a wedding ring from her husband will most certainly guard over it carefully and will not give it to anyone else; for all the money in the world, she will not sell it. This is because the ring symbolizes the love and admiration expressed by her husband at the time that he took her for his wife. The ring is very personal and close to her heart. She will not part with it forever. So too it is with our holy Torah, which is our wedding ring – and even more. We will never forget it or abandon it; even for all the money in the world we will never part with it.

A woman cannot disconnect from her husband. Even if she would run away to the other end of the world, she will still remain married to him. But, only if her husband would give her a divorce, then she would break her connection with him. So too Am Yisrael are connected to Hashem, like a woman to her husband, following their marriage that took place on Mount Sinai. Therefore, even if they would run away and hide from Him, they can never break their bond with Hashem, and will always remain His people. And just as a husband is obligated to support his wife and provide for her, likewise Hashem is as if obligated to sustain His people. How lucky the Jewish people are to be sustained by Hashem.

CHAZAK U'BARUCH



In order to understand to what extent we are obligated to practice the commandment: "Love your fellow as yourself," it can be illustrated by the following story.

It began when the son of the tzaddik, Rabbi David of Lelov, *zt"l*, fell ill and his condition went from bad to worse, until he was on the brink of death.

Of course, the people of Lelov, whose admiration and respect for their revered Rabbi knew no bounds, did everything in order to arouse the mercy of Heaven on the son of the tzaddik. They arranged a rally of prayer and tears, gatherings in the Beit Haknesset to recite Tehillim in shifts, and aroused the people to do teshuvah and perform good deeds.

Indeed, Hashem does not reject the prayers of His people, and not long after, the tzaddik's son was out of danger. Later, he even returned to his former health and got out of bed, with no trace of his severe illness.

On the day that his son went out of his house for the first time to the market, a few of the tzaddik's followers came to the Rebbe in order to share in his joy. They were sure that they would find their Rebbe in high spirits and cheerful, but they were taken aback when they found him sitting in his chair crying!...

"Rebbe"! – The chassidim could not contain their surprise. "Why are you crying? Is this not a most joyous moment! It is not a time of thanksgiving to the Master of the world for His endless lovingkindness?" they claimed. But the Rebbe explained:

"There is no doubt that you are absolutely right! My mouth is full of praise and thanks to the Master of the world that he cured my son and brought him back to life. However, when I think about the dedicated efforts of the people for my son's recovery, there is a certain feeling inside of me that gives me no peace..."

I ask myself: Why does all this devotion of people praying and crying day and night only express itself when it concerns my son? When it concerns the illness of any ordinary Jew, no rallies are held for prayer and tearful supplication.

The Rebbe went on to ask: I also am trying to understand, why when my son got sick, all the people volunteered to help and came to fulfill the mitzvah of visiting the sick selflessly, and so forth, making every effort to ease the suffering of my son. But when anyone else in the community is sick and needs assistance, no one makes such efforts.

The holy Torah commands us: 'Love your fellow as yourself!' The Torah commands us to love each and every Jew, just as we love ourselves!" Thus, if we were to get sick, wouldn't we want to have everyone pray for our recovery with absolute devotion? Wouldn't we wish that people would come to help us bear our burden and try to ease the pain as much as possible?

Why did we abandon this mitzvah? Where are our sensitivities? I am tormented by these thoughts, and therefore I am crying!" the Rebbe concluded his simple but powerful words...



men OF FAITH

The Returned Dowry

Rabbi Shimon Hakohen, the grandson of the holy tzaddik, Rabbi David Ben Baruch, told Moreinu v'Rabbeinu that once he traveled with his wife from Mogador to Marrakesh. In middle of the way, his wife began to worry. She told her husband, "I suspect that I left the iron on, and it may cause a fire."

Rabbi Shimon immediately phoned his neighbor in Mogador and asked him to go into his house to turn off the iron. To his great surprise, his neighbor informed him that there was no need to do so. "Why not?" Rabbi Shimon asked. "This morning, Rabbi Chaim already came to our house and asked us to disconnect the electricity in your house, since you went to Marrakesh and forgot to turn off the iron."

There is also another story related by Rabbi Shimon Cohen, the grandson of the tzaddik Rabbi David Ben Baruch, zt"l:

Rabbi Cohen built a building in Mogador. During the process, Rabbi Chaim Hakatan came to the site and told him, "Something is due to happen here, but in the merit of my holy forefathers, in the end, it will not happen."

Indeed, the blessings of the Rav in the merit of these tzaddikim came to light a short while later. One of the workers fell from above and miraculously did

not get hurt, since Rabbi Chaim had prayed for him that nothing should happen.

The worker got up on his feet, unharmed. Rabbi Shimon Cohen took him to Rabbi Chaim to let him know of the wondrous miracle that occurred and to give praise to Hashem.

Knocking out the Toothache

One of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu's students told the following story:

When his grandfather Rabbi Chaim Hakatan was in Morocco, an unusual incident occurred. One of the members of the community suffered from a terrible toothache. The whole night, he tossed and turned in his bed but could not sleep. He prayed that in the merit of the tzaddik Rabbi Chaim Pinto, Hashem should send him relief.

Suddenly, he heard knocking on his door. His family members went to open it, and to their surprise they saw Rabbi Chaim Hakatan standing in the entrance. He told them, "For the last several hours, I have not been able to sleep, since the head of your house has been praying to Hashem to send him relief in the merit of my holy fathers."

Rabbi Chaim approached him and touched his tooth, and the pain subsided immediately.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Not Offending Torah Scholars

"Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death" (*Shemot* 19:12).

The Chafetz Chaim comments in his sefer on the Torah: If Mount Sinai, which cannot reason or sense at all, became sanctified at the receiving of the Torah to the extent that Bnei Yisrael were warned not to touch even its furthest corner, how much more so does this apply to a Torah scholar, who learns the Torah itself, and possesses intelligence and feels humiliation, that one should not offend his honor in the least bit. This is to the extent that one who offends a Torah scholar, it is as if he offended the apple of His Eye.



GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Known as a Rasha

All that we have mentioned, that it is forbidden to accept *lashon hara* about a Jew, is referring to an ordinary Jew. But if he is already known to all as a *rasha*, since it was publicized several times in the past that he deliberately transgressed obvious prohibitions, regarding him one may accept *lashon hara*.

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