

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

אתה נגלית בענן כבודך על עם קדשך לדבר עמם מן השמים השמעתם קולך ... (נוסח למוקף ראש השנה)

Chazal note that the *Torah* uses the singular form, "אִישׁ שֶׁם", to describe an entire nation gathered at *Har Sinai*. It was a moment when hundreds of thousands stood together as one heart, one mind, one purpose. The mountain trembled, the heavens opened, and the world held its breath. It was the moment of supreme revelation, when a Nation saw the word of G-d.

There was once a devoted *chassid* of the **Maharid of Belz, R' Yissachar Dov Rokeach ז"ל**, a man who had traveled faithfully to his *Rebbe* for every *Yom Tov*, every *tish*, every moment of elevation that the *Belzer Rebbe* offered. His journeys were long, often difficult, but he made them with joy, for he felt that each visit brought him closer to the light of *chassidus*. Yet one year, as the *Yom Tov of Shavuos* approached, a thought entered his mind. He remembered the enormous crowds that gathered in Belz during the holiday - the crush of people, the noise, the endless stream of visitors who came from every corner of the region. He recalled how difficult it was to find a place to stand, how the air grew thick with heat and anticipation, how the *Rebbe* was surrounded on all sides by those seeking a blessing or a word of guidance. He reasoned with himself. Why must he travel when the crowds were at their peak? Would he not be able to receive more, understand more, and connect more deeply if he came a week later, when the tumult had quieted and the *Rebbe* could give him more focused attention? He convinced himself that this was not laziness or avoidance; he could be a more refined vessel to receive the *Rebbe's Torah*. With this thought, he remained in his own town for the holiday, *davening* with sincerity, learning with diligence, and imagining the moment when he would soon stand before his *Rebbe* in a more peaceful setting.

One week after *Shavuos*, he set out on his journey. The roads were familiar, the inns unchanged, the wagon wheels steady and reassuring. When he finally arrived in Belz, he felt a quiet satisfaction. He had made the right decision, he told himself. Now he would be able to receive the *Rebbe's* words without distraction, without the pressure of the holiday crowds.

When he entered the *Rebbe's* room, the *Maharid* greeted him warmly, as he always did. After a few moments, the *Rebbe* asked gently, "And how was your journey for *Yom Tov*? We did not see you among the *chassidim* this *Shavuos*."

The *chassid* answered honestly, explaining the reasoning that had guided his choice. He spoke of the crowds, of the difficulty of approaching the *Rebbe* during the festival, of his desire to be a more worthy vessel for the *Torah* he hoped to receive. He concluded with confidence that coming after the holiday had surely been the better path.

The *Rebbe* listened quietly, his eyes resting on the *chassid* with a mixture of patience and something deeper, something the *chassid* could not yet name. When the man finished speaking, the *Maharid* leaned back slightly and said, almost to himself, "Yetz ich farshstay der rabbanim vos ken nisht lernen - Now I understand why there are rabbis who cannot learn."

The *chassid* blinked, startled. The *Rebbe* continued, his voice soft but he sighed as if carrying the weight of generations. "At the time of *Matan Torah*," he said, "when our ancestors stood at the foot of *Har Sinai*, the mountain was surrounded by a vast multitude. The air was filled with thunder and flame, the sound of the *shofar*, the trembling of creation itself. And among that great crowd were some who looked around and said in their hearts, 'Why should we push ourselves into this crush of people? Why should we stand in the heat and the noise? Would it not be better to wait until the giving of the *Torah* is over, until the crowds disperse, and then we will come to the mountain? Then we will receive the *Torah* in peace and quiet.'

"And so they waited. They told themselves it was smart, the right thing to do. But when they finally came to the mountain, they found nothing. The revelation had passed. The fire had faded. The voice had ceased. The mountain stood silent."

The room was still. The *Belzer chassid* felt the words settle over him like a heavy cloak, though the *Rebbe* had offered no rebuke, no explicit lesson. He had told a simple story, one that ended with a quiet truth that echoed across centuries, from **Sinai to Belz, from the thunder of revelation to the soft creak of a wooden floor beneath a *chassid's* feet.** (Translated from Seder Imrei Dvash)

יציב פתגם לאת ודגם כרבו רבבו עירוי עני
אנה כמניא דפסלוי ארבעה מורין ... (יום ב')

Shavuos is a time of deep spiritual aspiration. The *Haftorah* for both days of *Yom Tov* describe a manifestation of *Hashem* and His greatness. *Shavuos* is referred to as the celebration of revelation, connected to the giving of the *Torah* and *Hashem's* appearance at *Har Sinai*. Yet the *Torah* itself never explicitly describes *Shavuos* this way; only תורה שבע"פ (Oral Law) does. In *Shavuos*, תורה שבכתב, is presented as the time of the wheat harvest, which is why the קרבן שתי הלחם, the offering of fine wheat loaves, is brought. What, then, is the connection? Why do *Chazal* ascribe *Shavuos* to *Matan Torah* while the *Torah* aligns it with the wheat harvest?

R' Tzadok HaKohen ז"ל (Pri Tzaddik) writes that wheat represents the growth and elevation of a person. Just as a small

wheat kernel can become a loaf of bread, so too a person has the inner ability to become great even if he is presently small in character. On *Shavuos*, the giving of the *Torah* elevates the world to the spiritual level that existed before the sin of Adam and Chava. **R' Chaim Volozhiner ז"ל (Ruach Chaim)** explains that a person should use *Shavuos* night to elevate himself to a higher status. *Chazal* teach in *Pirkei Avos* (6:1) that when a person learns *Torah* for its own sake, it prepares him to be righteous - "מכשרתו" - from the word "מכשיר" to *Kasher*. Just as we *Kasher* a pot by purging absorbed tastes, *Torah* study purges foreign ideas and experiences.

Shavuos is meant to purify us through *Torah* and recognition of *Hashem's* greatness, elevating us to unimaginable levels.

DEEP, PENETRATING ANALYSIS
OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

בחדש השלישי לצאת בני ישראל מארץ מצרים ביום הזה באו מדרבר סיני ... (שמות ט"א)

In *Parshas Yisro* there are several *posukim* which describe the days leading up to קבלת התורה. **Rashi** on the above *posuk* quotes *Chazal* who ask, why does it say "ביום הזה" - this day, and not "ביום הווי" - that day, as we are commemorating what transpired then? He answers that this teaches us the axiom "ביום הווי קיינו כחדשים". From here, says **R' Yerucham Levovitz ז"ל**, we can learn a lesson that not only should the actual text of the *Torah* be like new - as *Chazal* say elsewhere - but even the "באו", coming to the *beis medrash* each and every day should be with a "frishkeit" and enthusiasm. The *posuk* in *Yechezkel* (46-9) says, "הבא דרך שער צפון...יצא דרך שער נגב". When one enters the בית המקדש through one entrance, their exiting should not be through the same door. **R' Chaim Shmulevitz ז"ל** explains that one of the greatest impediments in עבודת ה' is "hergel" - routine. "Rote" tends to make things boring. Thus, we are instructed to constantly keep things different and fresh.

Someone once asked if it was wise to ask **R' Shach ז"ל** (who was 99 at the time) crucial life's queries. Being so old, he must be out of touch! The sharp reply received was eye-opening! R' Shach is not 99! He is three times 33-years-old! He live each day with freshness and vigor, never stopping his youthful learning. Plus, he has life experience and additional *daas Torah*.

A story is told of a young "Rebbishe Einikel" who was *davening selichos* next to his *Zaida*. The *Rebbe* asked him why when saying the first few *posukim* of שמע קולו, he exhibited extra fervor but not when he said וקנה לעת זקנה? "It doesn't apply to me! I'm not old yet!" said the boy. The *Rebbe* replied: "Sometimes we lose our zest even when we are young! These words don't necessarily refer to a chronologically old person. We beg *Hashem* that even when we are young we shouldn't lose our freshness!"

This *Yom Tov of Shavuos*, let us try to internalize this *machshava*, serving *Hashem* with the excitement of a young child. As it says, "כי נער ישראל ואהבתו". *Hashem* loves us even more when we are young and vibrant. *A Freilichen Yom Tov!*

משל למה הדבר דומה

ובאו כולם בברית יחד נקשה ונשמע אמרו כאחד ... (זמרת שבת)
משל: World renowned speaker, **R' Elimelech Biderman shlitia**, related the following story about his grandfather, the **tzaddik, R' Pinchas Menachem Malach ז"ל**, who was known for his relentless diligence in *Torah* study. For most of his life, he was accustomed to staying awake for many late hours, immersing in his studies. In his later years, however, his physical strength began to wane, and he no longer possessed the stamina required to maintain his rigorous, late-night learning sessions. Yet, his deep love for *Torah* never faded. Every single night before going to sleep, he would take out various *seforim* and prepare them on his table.

Bewildered by this nightly ritual, his son finally asked, "Tatteh, why are you taking out all these *seforim* if you

aren't going to learn from all of them?"
R' Malach answered. "My son, I'm taking out the *seforim* that I would have learned had I had the strength to learn!"

Although he lacked physical capability, setting the *seforim* out was an expression of his burning desire to learn. And because his yearning was so genuine, he explained, *Hashem* considered it as if he had actually learned from them.

משל: The essence of *Shavuos* is the heart's longing for *Torah*. When *Klal Yisroel* stood at *Har Sinai*, and accepted the *Torah* with the enthusiastic declaration of "Na'aseh V'Nishma," it demonstrated a powerful commitment and desire that preceded their actual understanding or ability to fulfill the *mitzvos*. We still possess that strength! True *Torah* dedication is not only measured by *limud Torah*, but by the relentless desire to connect with it, even when the body can necessarily keep up.

אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבת עבדים ... (שמות כ-ב)

INSIGHTFUL TORAH THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY SEDRA TO LEARN AND TO ENJOY BY R' MOSHE GELB

הנפש

In the *Haggadah shel Pesach* we say that if *Hashem* had only brought us before *Har Sinai*, but not given us the *Torah*, that would have been sufficient cause for us to give Him thanks. This seems puzzling; what purpose would there bein bringing us to *Har Sinai* if He had not given us the *Torah*?

Additionally, throughout the weeks of *Sefirah*, there is a *minhag* to learn *Pirkei Avos*. This, too, seems strange. Being that we are supposed to be preparing for *Matan Torah*, would we not be better served in learning the sixth *perek* alone, which discusses and extols the many aspects and virtues of *Torah* study? Why do we learn the other *perakim* as well?

The **Avudraham** answers that this is because aside from the study of *Torah* itself, there is also a *Hakdamah* to the *Torah*, a necessary prerequisite to its study; as per the *Mishnah* in *Avos*, that *Hakdamah* is *derech eretz*, i.e., to have good *middos*. Thus, in anticipation of *Matan Torah*, we busy ourselves with the *middos tovos* and ethical conduct outlined in *Pirkei Avos* so that we may come to receive the *Torah* having acquired the prerequisite for doing so.

Now, if good *middos* are the *Hakdamah* to *Torah*, the first lesson one must learn is the first *dibbur* given at *Har Sinai*: אנכי ה' אלקיך, to believe in and be aware of *Hashem*. But **R' Tzaddok HaKohen of Lublin ז"ל** adds a *moiradike hosafah*. He writes that just as one is thus obligated to believe in *Hashem*, so is one obligated – in the exact same measure – to believe in himself! A *yid* must say "אנכי ה' אלקיך", I am "ה' אלקיך". In other words, I, too, possess a spark of *Hashem*, my חלק אלוך מומעל. I am G-dly! אנכי ה' אלקיך! This is the *aleph-beis* of *avodas Hashem*, and of the entire *Torah*.

This is what the *Haggadah* means to say. At *Har Sinai*, we gained so much more than the *Torah* itself. We gained the awareness that we are a ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש and an elevated, holy nation. We got our *zich*, the knowledge of who we are and how each and every one of us has the potential for *gadlus*! That, indeed, is enough to require us to thank *Hashem* for all eternity.