

לעילו נשמת: פייגה בת הרב אהרן ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Naso

לזכות רפואה שלמה,
מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית
יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה,
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Torah Wellsprings

Naso

Be Yourself

On the day the Mishkan was inaugurated (*rosh chodesh Nisan*) the nesi'im offered korbanos to dedicate the mizbeiach (*chanukas hamizbeiach*). Hashem commanded that they shouldn't bring all the korbanos on one day. Rather, (7:1) נָשִׂיא אֶחָד לְיוֹם נָשִׂיא אֶחָד לְיוֹם יִקְרִיבוּ אֶת קֶרְבָּנָם לַחֲנוּכַת הַמִּזְבֵּיחַ, "One nasi per day should bring his korbanos for *chanukas hamizbeiach*."

Each brought the same set of korbanos, and the Torah repeats the same set of korbanos twelve times, once for every nasi. The Torah is always brief with

its words. Why the repetition here?¹

The Ramban writes, "The Midrash states that each nasi, individually, came up with the idea to bring sacrifices to dedicate the *mizbeiach* and the amount and size of the korban. They all came up with the same amounts that this korban should be, but they differed in the reasons. Nachshon thought to bring this number of korbanos for one reason, and each of the nesi'im had their individual reason.

"Nachshon brought a קַעֲרָה כֶּסֶף, a silver dish, because its *gematriya* is 930, the amount of years Adam

1. A simple answer is that Hashem loves the Mishkan very much, therefore, anything related to the Mishkan is discussed with elaboration. In parashas Terumah and Tetzava (and the beginning of Ki Sisa) the Torah writes how the Mishkan should be built and then in Vaykhel Pikudei the Torah elaborates that it was built that way.

lived. Its weight was 130 *shekels*, corresponding to Adam's age when he had his child [שת]... Or we can explain his set of *korbanos* as the Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 13:13) tells it: Yaakov Avinu revealed to each *shevet* what would happen to them until Moshiach comes. Nachshon brought... the *קערה ומזרק*, dish and cup, which represent the two kings that will come from his tribe, [Yehudah], who will rule over the land and sea: Shlomo and Melach HaMoshiach. Therefore, he brought a round dish, which represents the sea that circles the world...

"Nesanel ben Tzoar [of Yissachar] brought the same *korbanos* for the *chanukas hamizbeiach*, but for different reasons. Yissachar's tribe is praised for their Torah wisdom. The *קערת כסף*, silver dish represents Torah...

"Zevulan did business and supported Yissachar [enabling Yissachar to

study Torah. Zevulan shared the reward for Torah study with Yissachar]. For Zevulan the *קערה* represents the sea, from where imports would come in, from which Zevulan earned his wealth...

"Similarly, the Midrash tells the different reasons each *shevet* had for their *korbanos* and the number of their sacrifices. This is the reason the Torah lists each *nasi's* sacrifice separately"

The Torah lists them separately because they were individually inspired, and each one had his own intentions.

Next week's *parashah* begins with the menorah. The Torah testifies (8:3) *ויעש בן אהרן אל מול פני המנורה העלה נרתיה*, that Aharon lit the menorah in the Mishkan. Rashi writes, *להגיד שבתו של אהרן שלא שינה*, "The *pasuk* is telling Aharon's praise that he didn't change [and he lit the menorah as he was commanded]."

שינה can also mean "repeat." According to this translation, the *pasuk* is praising Aharon that he never repeated the same deed. He lit the menorah every day for forty years in the desert and each time he lit the menorah it was with new emotions and new intentions.

Because there are no duplicates in Hashem's world. There aren't even two leaves or blades of grass that are exactly alike, and likewise with all other parts of creation. Everything is different. Similarly, Hashem wants that *avodas Hashem* should always be new. Each day should be new. Externally, the deeds appear the same, but it should be different each time, by the intentions and inspiration that lie behind the deed. This was Aharon's praise because he never did the same deed twice. It was always new, because of his inspiration and intentions. This is the reason the Torah repeats

the twelve sets of *korbanos* that were brought for *chanukas hamizbeiach*. They are not the same, because each tribe brought their *korbanos* with their own inspiration and intentions.

When the Yidden stood at the Yam Suf, the sea was in front of them and the Mitzrim were pursuing them from behind. The Torah (*Shemos* 14:10) says, ויצעקו בני ישראל אל ה', "Bnei Yisrael shouted out to Hashem."

Rashi writes, תפשו אומנות, אבותם, "They grabbed the profession of their forefathers,;" the profession of prayer.

Reb Ovadyah Bartenura (in his commentary on Rashi) *zt'l* explains that this means they didn't pray because they understood that Hashem would help them when they turn to Him with prayer. Rather, they were copying what their ancestors would do whenever they were in a difficult situation.

Hashem answered their *tefillos*, although they were imperfect, because even imperfect *tefillos* are special to Hashem. But it would have been better if they would have understood that they need *tefillah*.

Tzaddikim say that to daven sincerely one must believe (1) that Hashem can help. (2) Hashem wants to help. (3) My *tefillos* can make a difference. If you believe in these three points, your *tefillos* will be real. Similarly, for all aspects of *avodas Hashem*, when one knows what he is doing and why, he can do all mitzvos with sincerity, and not merely to mimic what others do.

Beis Ahron

The 17th of Sivan is the *yahrtzeit* of Reb Aharon of Stolín, *zt'l*, the Beis Ahron. The Rebbe of Kozmir *zt'l* called him "the *freilechen tzaddik*" because he was always happy. People thought this was his nature,

but the Yesod HaAvodah (of Slonim) *zy'a* said that by nature, the Beis Aharon didn't possess a happy disposition. His happiness was the result of his *hischazkus* (his focus on thoughts that brought him to joy).

He also taught his chassidim to be happy. There was one person, though, who was always depressed. The Beis Aharon told him the following *mashal*:

There was once a family traveling to a *chasunah*. The bride was also on board, and the joy was tangible. A pauper stood on the side of the road and asked if he could join them for the ride.

They answered, "If you can be happy with us, you can join. But if you are going to be sad, you will ruin the atmosphere, and you can't join us."

The sad man understood the Rebbe's counsel. His

sad disposition mustn't ruin the happy atmosphere of the Stoliner chassidim. If he wants to be with them, he must be happy.

Joy is one of the pillars upon which the *avodas Hashem* of the Stoliner chassidim stands. Another pillar is *tefillah*. The inspirational, loud, and joyous *tefillos* of the Stoliner chassidim is well known.

One Shabbos, a rav from a different city was visiting the Stoliner Rebbe and chassidim, and he heard the Beis Aharon begin *Baruch She'amar*. He waited for the Beis Aharon to finish the *brachah*, but all he heard was the shouts of the prayers from the Rebbe and the chassidim. The rav assumed that the custom in this *beis medresh* was that the *chazan* didn't end each piece, so the rav continued to daven on his own pace. When he reached *Yishtabach*, he heard the Rebbe shout with all his might, in the renowned Stoliner tone, יחיד חי העולמים מלך משובח... So slow

and passionate were their *tefillos*.

The Yetzer Hara

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88) tells us that when Hashem wanted to give the Torah to the Jewish people, the *malachim* in heaven protested, "Why should this holy, precious, and hidden treasure [the Torah] be given to human beings?"

Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu to answer the *malachim*.

Moshe Rabbeinu asked them, "Let's see what's written in the Torah. לֹא תַחַמְדוּ, it is forbidden to be jealous of others. Does this apply to you? Does the concept of jealousy exist among you?"

"Now let's see what else is written in the *Aseres HaDibros*. לֹא תִנְאֵף, 'don't adulterate.' Do *malachim* have a *yetzer hara*?" In this way, Moshe proved to them that the mitzvos are

for human beings; not for *malachim*.

We can take a very important lesson from this: When people see their shortcomings, their bad *middos*, their temptations, they think the Torah isn't for them. How could the holy Torah be speaking to someone as lowly as himself? But upon deeper reflection, we understand that the Torah was given specifically to people who have bad tendencies, to people who must be warned not to steal, murder, adulterate, etc.²

We can express it this way:

Hashem gave us the Torah *because* we have a *yetzer hara*. Our faults make us ideal candidates for receiving the Torah.

Chametz represents the *yetzer hara*. So why do we use chametz as a *korban* on Shavuos?

The answer is, the *yetzer hara* gives us our rights to the Torah. The temptations and the struggle to keep the Torah is what make our service special to Hashem, and it is the reason Hashem gave us the Torah.³

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88) says that when the Jewish people were standing at

2. At the holy time of *matan Torah*, one might expect that Hashem would tell the nation the secrets of kabbalah, and the like. But Hashem told them, "Don't kill. Don't steal. Don't be jealous..." because the Torah was given to human beings, to people who have these tendencies and desires. Therefore, even these matters have to be spelled out.

3. There is a custom to decorate the beis medresh on Shavuos with trees that don't bear fruit. These trees imply that even lowly people, those who aren't producing any fruit, are special. Hashem gave the Torah for them.

Har Sinai, Hashem raised the mountain over their heads to force them to accept the Torah.

Tosafos asks: The nation had already expressed their willingness and desire to keep the Torah when they said *נעשה ונשמע*. Why was it necessary to raise the mountain over their heads to force them to accept the Torah?

My grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov *zy'a*, answered:

Chazal tell us that by *mattan Torah*, *בסקה והומתן*, their impurity ceased, and they no longer had a *yetzer hara*. A mountain represents the *yetzer hara* (see *Succah* 52:). "Hashem placed the mountain over their heads" means Hashem brought the *yetzer hara* back. Because if everyone will be totally pure, there wouldn't be any purpose in *mattan Torah*. The purpose of *mattan Torah* is that people should have the *yetzer hara* and will nevertheless

overcome all challenges to do Hashem's will.

The Home

A first grade *melamed* discovered that one of his students was stealing. When the children played outdoors one child stayed behind in the classroom, and stealthily searched the bags of his classmates, and stole their snacks. There were also items missing from the first-grade classroom (crayons, a ball, etc.) and the *melamed* assumed that this child was taking those, too.

This child came from a good home, so the *melamed* was surprised by this child's behavior. He called the child's parents.

The parents admitted that they also noticed that things have been disappearing lately - including money - and they said they would speak with their son.

During their conversation, they discovered the root of the problem. This child shared a room with his grandmother. She wasn't permitted to eat sugar, but because of her old-age and failing mind, she didn't totally realize that. At nighttime, when no one was around, she would sneak into the kitchen, take some sweets, and conceal them in her drawer.

Later, when the elderly grandmother wasn't watching, the mother would secretly open her drawers and *steal* the items back.

The child watched this each day. He saw his grandmother *stealing* and he saw his mother *stealing* it back, and that is how he acquired the habit of stealing.

Children learn from what they see, and therefore, it is important to be a role model for the children.

Before *mattan Torah*, Hashem said (*Shemos* 19) כה תאמר לבית יעקב ותגיד לבני ישראל, "This is what you should tell the house of Yaakov (Beis Yaakov) and tell it to the sons of Yisrael (Bnei Yisrael)." Rashi writes that בית יעקב, the house of Yaakov, are the women, and בני ישראל, the sons of Yisrael, are the men.

Why are the women called house (בית יעקב)? Why aren't they called Bnos Yaakov, "the daughters of Yaakov," similar to the men who are called Bnei Yisrael?

We answer with a *mashal*:

Someone had a lot of phlegm in his throat; he couldn't even speak. Doctors told him that there were two remedies to choose from. One method is to take strong medicines. The other approach is to go into a heated room that contains spices and incenses. The fumes of the spices and incense will clear up his throat.

These are the two paths people can use to conquer the *yetzer hara*. One path is to take medicine, and that medicine is Torah study. As Chazal (*Kidushin* 30) say, "I created the *yetzer hara* and I created Torah as its remedy." But what should women, who don't study Torah, do?

They should use the second remedy: They need to be in a warm house, where good smelling incenses and spices permeate the atmosphere. In other words, girls and women need to be raised in a warm and loving home that permeates the scents of Torah and *yiras shamayim*. The warmth and joy of Yiddishkeit should be experienced in their home. This will banish the *yetzer hara*, because the *yetzer hara*

with all its enticements can't compete with the wonderful atmosphere of a Jewish home. She will ignore all enticements of the *yetzer hara* because she has experienced something better and sweeter.

The Torah calls women, **בית יעקב**, the house of Yaakov, because it's the house, filled with the joy of Torah and *yiras shamayim*, which is so essential for women. This is their remedy against the *yetzer hara*.⁴

The Gemara (*Succah* 56) says, "A story happened with Miriam the daughter of Bilgah. She was an apostate, married to a Greek king. When the Greeks came into the *heichel* of the Beis HaMikdash (in the days of the Chashmona'im) she kicked the *mizbeiach* with her sandal and said

4. It is written, **בנעוריה בית אביה** and the Gemara learns from these words, **כל שבה נעורים לאביה** (*Kiddushin* 3). We can translate it as follows: It is the **בית אביה**, the father's home, permeated with Torah and *yiras shamayim*, which brings forth **כל שבה נעורים**, all the goodness and righteousness of the Jewish girls.

'Lukos! Lukos! (wolf in Greek, referring to the *mizbeiach*). For how long will you devour the money of the Jewish people, and you don't help them when they need help?' When the *chachamim* heard about this [they forbade her family members from serving in the Beis HaMikdash]."

The Gemara asks, why must her entire family suffer if only one member sinned? The Gemara replies, "The words a child speaks in the market is what she heard from her father or mother." The *chachamim* understood that if Miryam bas Bilgah kicked and disgraced the *mizbeiach* she must have acquired this attitude from her parents. Therefore, they also had to suffer the consequences.

Children see, hear, and understand a lot more than we are aware of. Therefore, it is important to make the home a bastion for Torah, mitzvos, and *yiras shamayim*, and then the children will

follow in their admirable ways.

The Laws of *Sotah*

The sinful woman, the *sotah*, miraculously became ill when she drank from the water. The *rishonim* teach that this is the only mitzvah of the Torah whose basic composition is based on a miracle.

As the Rambam (*Sotah* 3:16) writes, "If the woman sinned, her face will immediately turn green, her eyes will pop out, and she will become filled with sinews (*gidim*). People will shout, 'Take her out! Take her out!' so she shouldn't contaminate the *ezras nashim* [of the Beis HaMikdash], and people will remove her from the *ezras nashim* where she was standing. Her stomach swells first, afterwards her legs falls off and she dies. At the very same time she dies, the man who sinned with her also dies, wherever he is..."

Open miracles were seen with the *sotah*; everyone saw that Hashem punishes those who sin.

The Klausenberger Rebbe *zy'a* told the following story:

A husband brought his wife to the Chida and his *beis din* and told them of his suspicions. He said that there was a *stirah* and that his wife had become a *sotah*. The Chida said the husband should divorce her. The other judges of the court were surprised that the Chida was so stringent, since there weren't witnesses; there was only the husband's accusation.

The Chida told the wife to accept a divorce willingly, but she spoke with *chutzpah* to the Chida, and she refused to accept a *get*.

The Chida told her, "I want you to listen to something," and he read to her the *parashah* of *Sotah*, as it is written in the Torah

(*Bamidbar* 5). When the Chida was halfway through reading it, the woman decided to leave. When the Chida read the words (*Bamidbar* 5:20) 'וְאָתָּה כִּי סָמִיתָ... יִתֵּן ה' אוֹתְךָ לְאֱלֹהִים... בַּת ה' אֵת יָרֵךְ נֹפֶלֶת וְאֵת בִּטְנֶךָ צָבָה, "and you, who sinned... Hashem will turn you into a curse... He will cause your leg to fall and your stomach will swell..." the woman was walking up the stairs to leave the court room. Her legs fell off and her stomach swelled, just as it happened to the *sotah* in the *Beis HaMikdash*.

The Chida explained that when the woman and her husband were standing before him, he remembered that he received a *brachah* from the Or HaChaim that he should have the *kedushah* of a *cohen*. He realized that there was a reason he remembered the Or HaChaim's blessings just at that time, and he decided to do that which a *cohen* does for a *sotah*.

Holding on to the Inspiration

This week's parashah discusses the חנוכת המזבח, the korbanos the nesi'im brought to dedicate the mizbeiach. Rashi (*Bereishis* 14:14) explains the concept of חנוכת המזבח: "The translation of חינוך is when a person or a utensil is inaugurated and brought, for the first time, to the service that it is made for. As it states (*Mishlei* 22:6) חנוך לנער, 'Educate a child.' And it states (*Bamidbar* 7:11) חנוכת המזבח, 'dedication of the mizbeiach.' And it states (*Tehillim* 30:1) חנוכת הבית, 'inauguration of the house.'" The purpose of the mizbeiach is to bring korbanos on it, and the first time korbanos are brought on the mizbeiach dedicates and prepares the mizbeiach for this service.

Another preparation for the mizbeiach was its anointment (which happened on rosh chodesh Nisan). As it states (*Bamidbar* 7:1) ויהי ביום כלות משה להקים את המשכן... משחם

ויקדש אותם, "It was the day Moshe completed putting up the Mishkan [rosh chodesh Nisan]...they anointed [the vessels of the Mishkan] and sanctified them."

So, we know that the mizbeiach was anointed on rosh chodesh Nisan, but when was the *chanukas hamizbeiach*?

One pasuk (7:84) states that it was on the same day it was anointed. As it states, זאת חנוכת המזבח ביום המשח אתו, "This is the *chanukas hamizbeiach* on the day the mizbeiach was anointed." But a few *pesukim* later the Torah seems to say that the *chanukas hamizbeiach* happened some days later. As it states (7:88) זאת חנוכת אתו, "This is the *chanukas hamizbeiach* after it was anointed."

These two *pesukim* seem to be contradictory; was it ביום המשח, on the day the mizbeiach was anointed (rosh chodesh Nisan), or was

it אחרֵי המִשָּׁח אֹתוֹ, some days later?

Rashi (7:84) raises this question (see footnote).⁵

The Imrei Emes zy'a says there is a concealed lesson hinted here. There are days when a person is inspired to do teshuvah. But generally, soon afterwards he goes back to his old ways. The Torah writes בְּיוֹם אַחֲרָיִם and אַחֲרָיִם to hint that when one merits a day of inspiration, he should see to it that it remains אַחֲרָיִם, afterwards as well.

This is particularly important to remember on

this Shabbos, the Shabbos after Shavuos. We just experienced an inspirational *yom tov*; we accepted the yoke of Heaven and the yoke of Torah. Now that Shavuos passed, our obligation is to maintain the inspiration and to hold on to our firm resolutions.

A Stoliner chassid spent Shavuos with his Rebbe. When he returned home, his friends asked him, "How did the *yom tov* pass?"

He replied, "It didn't pass. It went inside." Because the goal isn't that

5. Rashi writes, "They brought *korbanos* the day the *mizbeiach* was anointed. So why does it say אַחֲרָיִם המִשָּׁח, that the *korbanos* were brought *after* it was anointed? The *mizbeiach* was anointed first and then they brought the *korbanos*."

In other words, they both happened on the same date - rosh chodesh Nisan. The Torah is clarifying the order: First came the מִשְׁחָה (anointment), and then the *korbanos* were brought for the הַנֹּחַח הַזֶּה. המִּזְבֵּיחַ.

אַחֲרָיִם doesn't mean a later date, rather it means after the anointment. The anointment came first, and later that same day they brought the *korbanos* for the dedication.

yom tov should pass by. The goal is that the inspiration should change us. We accepted the Torah, and this should have results. We should do something towards becoming better than before. Perhaps by taking on small *kabbalos* for improvement.⁶

Regarding *mattan Torah* it states, וקדשתם היום ומחר, "Sanctify yourselves today and tomorrow." The goal is ומחר, to hold on to the inspiration for tomorrow – after Shavuot passes.

Following *mattan Torah* it states (*Devarim* 5:27), לך אומר, להם שובו לכם לאהליכם "Tell the nation to return home." People have to go back to

their homes, to their work, to their previous routines. They can't stay on the exalted, high level that they experienced on the *yom tov* of *mattan Torah* forever. The question is how they will appear when they return home.

The *yetzer tov* says שובו לכם לאהליכם, return home, but maintain an imprint from the experiences that you experienced. Let the inspiration remain with you, forever. The *yetzer hara* tells people שובו לכם לאהליכם return home and go back to your old ways. There should be no sign that anything changed.

In *Oz Yashir* we say, אומר "The אויב ארדוף אשיג אהלק שלל"

6. The *yetzer hara* knows the person won't listen to him to commit severe aveiros. Therefore, the *yetzer hara* convinces the person to do a "small" *aveirah* here and there, and from there he gradually encourages him to do greater *aveiros*.

We can learn from this to do the same with *kabbalos tovot*. If you take on too much, you won't be able to keep it up. So, take on a small step towards improvement, and then take on another good deed. Eventually, you will improve your ways.

enemy says I will divide the שלל "שלל" is *roshei teivos* of לאהליכם, שובו לכם לאהליכם, "return to your tents." The enemy is the *yetzer hara*. He tells us to return to our tents, to our old ways. He advises us not to hold onto the inspiration that we experienced on Shavuos.

The wise, however, do as it says in *Eishes Chayil*, במה בה לב בעלה ושלל לא יחסר. Even after *yom tov* passes (as implied by שלל, which is the *roshei teivos* of לאהליכם) they remain with the inspiration and with the passion for Torah they had on Shavuos.

The *chachamim* call this *yom tov* שבועות and the Torah calls it עצרת. Both names imply that one should hold on to his resolutions for improvement, even after *yom tov* passes, as we will explain:

שבועות means to swear. The Beis Avraham *zt'l* says that this is because on Shavuos everyone gives his word and promise (not a promise with words, but a promise to himself, in his thoughts) that he will adhere to the Torah. It can be compared to soldiers who are sworn-in when they are conscripted into the army. We are drafted into Hashem's army, so we must also give our word and promise that we will accept the yoke of Heaven and abide by all the Torah's laws.

The other name for Shavuos is עצרת, which means to hold back. We can explain that it is called עצרת, because the goal is to hold on to the inspiration we had also after *yom tov* passes.⁷

7. The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* says that והשיאנו (which we say in the *yom tov tefillah*) is from the word נישואין, marriage.

When you come to a *chasunah*, everyone is dressed in their Shabbos

clothes. How do you know who is the *chasan*? The one who goes home with the *kallah*, he is the *chasan*. Similarly, after the marriage with the Torah, those who will study Torah after Shavuos, that's the sign that he is the *chasan*.

The Nesivos Shalom *zt'l* asked some *bachurim*, "When is the moment that *mattan Torah* happens for us?"

One *bachur* replied, "It's on Shavuos, by *alos hashachar*."

A second *bachur* said, "It happens when we read the *aseres hadibros*."

A third *bachur* said another time.

The rebbe replied, "*Kabalas haTorah* happens when a person accepts the yoke of Torah."

Based on this, *kabalas haTorah* can happen throughout the year, too. Whenever one accepts the yoke of Heaven, that is *kabalas haTorah*.

There's a mitzvah to remember *mattan Torah* every day. Reb Tzaddok HaCohen *zt'l* said that the mitzvah is primarily to remember that the Jewish nation said *ונעשה ונשמע*, and they accepted the yoke of Torah. We should remember that and do the same.

Someone asked the Skluner Rebbe *zt'l*, "Which kabbalah should I take on." The Rebbe replied, "A good kabbalah is *עול מלכות שמים*, to accept the yoke of heaven."

Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* said, "There are many deeds of *chassidus* and righteousness that a person can do, but the most precious service before Hakadosh Baruch Hu is to make Hashem happy through studying Torah. This is evident, because the *yetzer hara* doesn't try so hard to prevent people from acting with *chassidus* and from doing other righteous deeds, as he invests all his strength to prevent people from studying Torah."

We thank Hashem, *מודים אנחנו לך ששמת חלקנו מיושבי בית המדרש ולא שמת חלקנו מיושבי קרנו*, "We thank you, Hashem, that you placed our portion among those who sit in the beis medresh, and not among those who sit on the [street] corners."

Creating a Vessel to Hold onto the Inspiration

It states (*Shir HaShirim* 2:7), **אם תעירו ואם תעוררו את אהבה עד שתחפץ**. The Ramban explains, "If you have a *hisorerus*, an inspiration of love to Hashem, **עד שתחפץ**, immediately place it into a **הפץ של מצוה**, an item of a mitzvah (such as by giving *tzedakah* or by studying Torah, etc.). That will capture the inspiration so that it doesn't leave him.

This is a technique that will help people hold on to their inspirational moments. They should immediately translate their inspiration into a practical deed, and that will help him maintain the inspiration.

Before the Torah was given, the *pasuk* describes Har Sinai as follows (*Shemos* 19:16): **ויהי קולות וברקים וענן כבד על ההר**, "There were voices and lightning and a heavy cloud was on the mountain."

When the Torah was given, it states (20:15), **וכל העם, רואים את הקולות ואת הלפידים**, "The entire nation saw the voices and the torches..." So, before *mattan Torah* there was lightning (ברקים), and after *mattan Torah* there were torches (לפידים). Lightning is a light that shines for a second and then it disappears. A torch burns for a long time.

The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* explains that before *mattan Torah* they didn't have a vessel to accept the great holy light, therefore it came like lightning and

In *Tikun leil Shavuot* we read the beginnings and the ends of several parts of the Torah. It is like we are reading the corners, the קרנות. We thank Hashem that we are not **יושבי קרנות**. Because we aren't only studying the corners of the Torah. *Be'ezras Hashem*, we will study Torah throughout the year, and we will learn the entire *masechtos* – and not just its corners. (Attributed to the Ben Ish Chai *zt'l*).

immediately disappeared. After they received the Torah, now they can maintain the spirituality. Before *mattan Torah* they couldn't maintain the *hislahavus* in their hearts; after *mattan Torah* they could.

Chazal (Succah 52) say, "The greater the person, the greater is his *yetzer hara*." Therefore, after the teshuvah and inspiration that people had on Shavuot, they reach a higher level. If they don't take effort to maintain their momentum of teshuvah, they will fall, because their *yetzer hara* has become stronger.

Chazal (*Brachos* 63) ask, "Why does the Torah discuss the *nazir* after the laws of a *sotah*? It is because whoever sees the *sotah* disgraced should choose to become a *nazir* to refrain from wine." Wine leads to aveiros and adultery. Someone who saw what happened to the *sotah* will choose to become a *nazir*,

because he wants to be forbidden to drink wine.

The Pri HaAretz asks, someone who saw the *sotah's* disgrace and punishment has a strong resolve never to drink wine. It seems that he is the last person who would have to become a *nazir* to avoid drinking wine. Why should he become a *nazir*?

The answer is, as Chazal say, "The greater the person, the greater is his *yetzer hara*." After seeing what happened to the *sotah*, he has a heightened realization on the severity of sin. This means he is at a higher level. Therefore, he has a stronger *yetzer hara*. He must therefore increase his precautions.

Don't Push it off for Later

There are people who want to improve; however, they claim that the current time and place isn't conducive for teshuvah. Therefore, they want to push off their teshuvah for

a later time and place, when they think it will be easier for them to improve their ways. But the Mishnah states, *אם לא עכשיו אימתי*, "If you won't improve now, when will you?"

Towards the end of his life, the Imrei Emes *zt'l* said, "When I was young, there were many sections of the Torah and several aspects of *avodas Hashem* that I was planning to get to later on in my life. But now I know that whatever one doesn't take on in his younger years he will never end up getting to later in life." Therefore, there is no time like the present.

Sometimes people say, "I can't Torah study in this place." They say that the *beis medresh*, *yeshiva*, neighborhood, etc., where they are located isn't conducive for them to study Torah. They explain that don't have good *chavrusos*, teachers, a loud *kol Torah* etc. So, in the meanwhile, they don't

apply themselves fully to studying Torah.

They are mistaken because every place is conducive for Torah study.

Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* proves this from *mattan Torah*. The Torah was given in the desert - and not in Eretz Yisrael. Furthermore, we don't know exactly where Har Sinai is located. This tells us that the place isn't important. Every place is a good place for learning Torah.

There are also people who say that the time isn't ideal for them to devote themselves to Torah study. Sometimes, they say this on a day they are busy, or on a day that started off "on the left foot." They just want the day to pass with the hope that tomorrow will be a better day. They will also say this when they are going through a hard time with *parnassah*, and they are busy most hours of the day.

Reb Yisrael Salanter *zt'l* said that they are mistaken, because every day is a good day for Torah. He proves this point from *mattan Torah*. There is a *machlokes* whether the Torah was given on the 6th or on the 7th of Sivan. So, we don't know exactly when the Torah was given. Furthermore, the Torah never tells us an exact date when we should celebrate Shavuos (other than that it is fifty days after the second day of Pesach). Unlike all other holidays, no date is stated for Shavuos. This is because the exact day doesn't make a difference, because every day is a good day for Torah.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner *zt'l* asked someone why he doesn't set aside time to study Torah. The man replied, "I'm poor and I must work many hours a day for my *parnassah*. No time is left for Torah study. If I'll take off time from my work, I won't have enough *parnassah*..."

Reb Chaim Volozhiner told him that he is speaking like the nations of the world spoke when Hashem offered them the Torah. Because before *mattan Torah*, Hashem offered the Torah to the nations of the world. All nations replied that if they accept the Torah, they won't be able to live.

When Hashem offered the Torah to Edom, they asked what was written there. Hashem told them about the prohibition of murder. They replied, "Our forefather, Eisav, received the *brachah* על הרבך תהיה, to live by the sword. If we accept the Torah, how will we live?" Similarly, all nations said that if they accept the Torah, they won't have *parnassah* and they won't be able to live.

Reb Chaim Volozhiner told him, "You're saying the same thing, because you're saying that if you accept the yoke of Torah you won't have *parnassah*

and you won't be able to live!"

When one owns cattle, he can decide when he wants to slaughter the animals - either immediately, or in the future. There is no rush. But when it comes to milking a cow, he must milk each cow every day or the milk of that day will be forfeited. There's a custom to eat *milichigs* on Shavuot. Perhaps this is to remind us to grab every opportunity for Torah and mitzvos, because what we don't utilize in the present, we won't have later on.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88.) tells that Hashem raised the mountain over the Jewish nation and said, "If you don't accept the Torah, שם תהיה קבורתכם, "You will be buried there." The question is: It should have stated פה תהיה קבורתכם, "You will be buried here." Why does it say שם, "there"?

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l* answered that the

Gemara is hinting that if a person will say "When I go there I will start learning Torah..." or "When times are better, I will devote myself to Torah" שם תהיה קבורתכם, the attitude of שם, "there" (pushing things off until he gets "there") תהיה קבורתכם, will bury him. Rather, he should take the reins of his life in hand and devote himself to Torah, immediately.

Learning Torah with Desire

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef *zt'l* (*Tzafnas Paanach*, end of *Bishalach*) writes, "I heard that there isn't Gehinom. Rather, they bring the *rasha* to Gan Eden, and that becomes his *gehinom*. He hears people davening with joy and they are dancing, and they are learning with *hasmadah*, and as he isn't accustomed to this. It is very painful for him... This is the explanation of the Gemara (*Nedarim* 8.), "Hakadosh Baruch Hu is going to take

the sun out of its holder. The sun will heal the tzaddikim and punish the *resha'im*.' The explanation is: The same source that brings joy for tzaddikim punishes the *resha'im*.... This is also the meaning of the Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 9), והנה טוב מאד זה גהנום, 'When the Torah writes (*Bereishis* 1:31), טוב מאד it refers Gehinom.'" It is טוב מאד because it is Gan Eden! It is a very good place, but it is also Gehinom for those who aren't accustomed to serving Hashem.

We see this happening in our world as well. Torah and *tefillah* can be Gan Eden for one person and Gehinom for another.

Reb Avraham min Hahar (from the *rishonim*) writes, "The primary part of the mitzvah [to study Torah] is that he should enjoy the wisdom. As it states (*Tehillim* 19), פקודי ה' ישרים, משמחי לב, 'Torah brings happiness to people's heart...' Therefore, with regards to studying Torah,

it is impossible to say, מצות לאו ליהנות נתנו, that the mitzvos weren't given for pleasure, because the primary part of the mitzvah of studying Torah is the pleasure that one derives from his studies.

"Therefore, if someone made a *neder*, a vow, saying 'Ploni may not derive pleasure from my possessions' it will be forbidden for Ploni to read from his *sefer*, because he will certainly derive pleasure..."

Reb Avraham min Hahar explains that you may use his mitzvos. For example, if someone vowed that you can't derive pleasure from him, you may borrow his *tefillin* - because of the principle, מצות לאו ליהנות נתנו, mitzvos weren't given for physical pleasure. However, regarding studying Torah it's different, because the essence of the mitzvah is to enjoy the wonderful wisdom of the Torah.

But what should a person do if he doesn't enjoy studying Torah? What should he do if studying Torah is like Gehinom for him?

The same question applies for *tefillah*. Those who love *tefillah* can daven for hours, and they don't want to stop. Each word is sweet like honey to them. But there are many who don't experience that, and for them *davening* is Gehinom. They rush through the *tefillah*, trying to finish as quickly as possible, so they can have as little of Gehinom as possible.

The same question is regarding mitzvos. There are people who love the mitzvos. For them, a mitzvah is more precious than gold and silver. But there are many who aren't on that level. In summary, how can one experience Gan Eden in this world, with their Torah, *tefillah*, and mitzvos?

The answer is: If you believe there is immense joy there, you will seek it and you will find it.

Halachah teaches that water is different than all other foods and beverages because one only makes a *shehakol* over water when he is thirsty. This is because water is only sweet for those who are thirsty.

Chazal teach that water represents Torah. Torah is sweet for those who are thirsty for it. If one learns Torah without interest, he won't appreciate the Torah he's learning.

One who tries to enjoy the Torah, he will succeed. As it states (*Shemos* 19:5), ועתה, אם שמוע תשמעו בקולי "Now, if you will listen to My voice [and accept the Torah]..."

Rashi explains that ועתה, "and now" means if you will accept the Torah now, it will become sweet for you from now on, because all beginnings are hard." Beginnings are hard. It

might even feel like Gehinom because he isn't accustomed to the sweetness of the Torah. But if he will accept the yoke of Torah, and try his best, he will discover just how sweet the Torah is. It will be Gan Eden for him and will never want to depart.

There's an expression in the *rishonim* (see Rambam, *Yesodei HaTorah* 4:3), מילא כריסו, ש"ם ופוסקים "to fill one's stomach with *Shas* and *poskim*."

The Kotzker *zt'l* asks that it should state "to fill one's *mind* with *Shas* and *poskim*" because one learns Torah with his mind, and not with his stomach.

The Kotzker answers: A few hours after one eats a meal he wants to eat again. This is the appetite we need for Torah. We should never be satisfied; always seeking more.

We say (in the *birchas hashachar*), תרגילנו בתורתך, "accustom us in your

Torah." The Imrei Emes *zt'l* asks that generally we don't want רגילות, to become accustomed and to turn *avodas Hashem* into rote. We want newness in *avodas Hashem*, as if it were the first time. So why do we pray, תרגילנו בתורתך, for familiarity in Torah?

The Imrei Emes replies with an analogy. One eats breakfast, lunch, and supper and each time it's like the first time. He eats with relish and desire each time. This is the רגילות that we seek in Torah. There should be routine and familiarity; we should be very acquainted with learning the Torah. Yet, it should always be like the first time.

When one studies Torah with *cheshek*, desire, that will help him understand Torah, as the following story demonstrates:

The Beis HaLevi *zt'l* toiled to understand a certain *rishon*. The topic was related to money

matters. Many commentaries ask strong questions on this *rishon's* opinion, and after immense study – for the duration of three days and three nights – the Beis HaLevi succeeded to answer all their questions in a satisfactory way, and to explain the correctness of this *rishon's* view.

Soon afterwards, the Beis HaLevi passed a municipal court, and he heard the person on trial say the same idea that the *rishon* said. (The simple person in court didn't know the *rishon*, it was just that he realized that this claim would help him earn money.)

Intrigued (because this was exactly the topic that he had recently studied in depth), the Beis HaLevi stopped to listen to the court case. He heard the judge ask the exact same questions as many commentaries ask on that *rishon*. The courtroom was silent for a few moments, and then the man spoke up and said the explanation that the Beis

HaLevi thought of (after three days and three nights of toil) and that removed all the questions.

The Beis HaLevi was upset that he had to toil so long to get to this understanding, while this simple person attained this logic on his own. But then he realized that this person couldn't have come up with this idea on his own if it weren't that this explanation and logic would earn him a lot of money. Because when something is important for a person, his mind works overtime and sharply, and he can come up with ideas that he generally couldn't acquire. The Beis HaLevi realized that if he came to the same conclusion, that means it was extremely important for him to understand Torah. Otherwise, he wouldn't have reached this understanding.

It states (*Tehillim* 119:93), לעולם לא אשכח פקודיך כי בם חיייתי. This can be translated, "I

will never forget Your Torah because Torah is my life." Something that is related to one's life, one doesn't forget it.

In summary, one can learn Torah and not understand anything, and even when he understands, he quickly forgets. This is often because he doesn't really care to know. Deep in his heart he feels that

until now, he managed fine in life without knowing this idea of Torah, and he thinks he can continue living well without knowing it. But when one knows that Torah is his life, as it states, *וְהָיָה בְּרָם*, he will put all his heart and soul into knowing Torah. With this attitude, he will understand and remember Torah.

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