

SHAVUOS

תשע"ט

We are preparing for the Yom Tov of Shavuos. Next week is kabbolas haTorah.

We have discussed many times the concept that every year we accept the Torah again. The gemara in Shabbos says one should not undergo any dangerous procedures Erev Shavuos—because the world is in a precarious state. Just like when Hashem was about to give the Torah at Har Sinai, the stakes were enormous—if the Jews would not accept the Torah, the world would have reverted to absolute chaos—tohu vavohu.

Hashem is the Nosein haTorah and also the Creator of the world. These two things are deeply interconnected and interdependent. Hashem created the world for a purpose—for the Torah—as Rashi quotes the midrash in Bereishis that the Torah is reishis darko. The Torah has two aspects. There is the chochmas HaTorah which is vast—it is all the chochmoh of Hashem that this world is capable of containing. Torah was created before the creation and was the blueprint of creation. But not merely a blueprint which can be discarded after the construction is complete. There is an ongoing relationship between the keeping and learning of the Torah by a chosen people, and the ongoing existence of the universe. The world was created with a specific goal and with it, an inherent instability—it could go back to nothingness and void if that goal is not fulfilled. Everything hangs in the balance of the success of spiritual mission of Klal Yisroel's acceptance of the Torah and ongoing fulfillment of the Torah.

When Klal Yisroel said naaseh venishmah, the Gemara says that the angels were astonished and came down to place two crowns on each Jew's head. Naaseh means we will perform mitzvos properly—which requires learning towards practical observance. This already includes an awful lot of information to be absorbed and put into practice. But then there is nishmah—another level of learning completely. It is learning for its own sake—and it is this learning which perpetuates the existence of the world. This learning is the essential component of the bris that sustains this world.

The Rambam explains in his introduction to Peirush HaMishnayos a puzzling statement of Chazal. Hashem has no part in this world except for the four amos of Halacha. What does that mean? How are the billions of people in China and India connected to the daled amos of halacha? The Rambam says the entire human race exists only for the sake of those few people have dedicated their lives to understanding Hashem and learning His Torah. So, whether we understand it or not, whatever happens in the far reaches of the Earth somehow must be serving the interests of Torah and those who are dedicated to learning it.

The Brisker Rav explained the gemara in Avodo Zoro that says that at the end of days the nations of the world come to Hashem demanding their reward. They will claim they facilitated the Jews in learning Torah by creating the infrastructure of the economic world. Hashem rejects their demand. The question is, how could the non-Jewish nations make such a claim in the first place? Did they feel they could fool Hashem and convince Him they were worthy when they really weren't? The answer is that what they were saying was absolutely true. It must be that at the end of history, when everything will be clear, the non-Jews will come to realize that all their economic achievements were in fact designed by Hashem to facilitate the fulfillment of the Torah by the Jews. So, they rightfully want to be rewarded. But Hashem says the reward is not deserved—even though you served as an unwitting

tool for furthering the goal of the Torah. Your motives were completely selfish. But the ultimate goal of the entire cosmos and everything that happens in the entire cosmos is for Klal Yisroel to learn and fulfill the Torah.

There are many levels of avodas Hashem, but limud HaTorah is what connects us on a daily basis to Hashem, more than any other mitzvah activity. We immerse our minds in the ideas of the Torah and this is what connects our minds to the mind of Hashem.

We find a striking pattern in Jewish history. Whenever there is a watershed event where the level of intensity of the presence of the shechinoh became drastically diminished, we are told to compensate with an increase of limud Torah.

The greatest level of gilui shechinoh was the time when Moshe Rabbeinu led Klal Yisroel in the Wilderness. But when Moshe Rabbeinu died there was a sharp decline in the hisgalus of shechinoh. While he was alive, Klal Yisroel in general enjoyed a higher level of deveikus. When he died, we were told to study Torah day and night in order to compensate for the loss.

While the Beis HaMikdosh stood, there was a tangible shechinoh in our midst with daily nissim and ruach hakodesh and Urim VeTumim. After the churbon, the posuk in Eichoh says kumi roni balayloh. The Gemara in Tomid says it is referring to limud haTorah—it is a song of the neshama which pours itself into the will of Hashem. Then you recapture that sense of closeness to Hashem that we had with the Beis HaMikdosh—nochach pnei Hashem. And this is a consolation for the churbon.

In the end of the sifrei Nevi'im—when the last nevuoh of the last novi is recorded and we will no longer have this mode of communication with Hashem, we are admonished, "Zichru Toras Moshe Avdi"—learn Torah with more resolve and more intensity.

When the second Beis HaMikdosh was about to be built, the midrash says Anshei Knesses HaGedolah insisted that the secrets of Torah Shebaal Peh be revealed. Why? There was a lessened degree of hashroas hashechinoh in the second Beis HaMikdosh. If they would have relied on hashroas hashechinoh of the Beis HaMikdosh then there would be a danger of a reverting to avodo zoro. They wanted to guarantee that the hashroas hashechinoh would be permanent this time through limud haTorah.

We all choose what our minds are preoccupied with. Learning Torah in a serious way engenders a total preoccupation with the ideas and the depth of Torah. It penetrates to a depth of your personality. This will not happen with superficial learning and mindless memorization. This ameilus in the depths of Torah brings one to a level of deveikus unparalleled by any other spiritual activity.

The Rambam writes, based on the gemara in Brochos and Sotah, that olam haboh is attained primarily through limud haTorah. The meaning of this is that we only deserve to be in olam haboh after we have developed and built up our neshomos. The place we rise to in olam haboh depends on the middos we develop in our character and the limud haTorah we absorb in our being. These two things impact our neshomo in a qualitative manner to allow the neshomo to be worthy of having a place in olam haboh. Only then will our mitzvos add the extra dimension which can increase our experience of olam haboh.

When your mind is preoccupied with Torah and you can't think

of anything besides Torah, along with middos tovos, then you are someone who belongs in olam haboh.

The Rambam writes in the end of Mishnah Torah in Hilchos Melachim what the point of yemos hamoshiach is all about. It is to give us all the physical prosperity and emotional serenity we need and eliminate all the distractions and impediments which keep us from learning Torah and keeping mitzvos to the maximum level humanly possible. We wait for moshiach so we can devote our entire consciousness to immersing in the concepts of the Torah and gain the highest level of olam haboh. The more we understand the Torah and the deeper we understand it, the more we connect to Hashem by achieving the greatest level of His chochmoh possible. Yemos hamoshiach makes that level of concentration and immersion in Torah possible—without any distractions. This is nishmah—learning to achieve an all-encompassing connection with the mind of Hashem.

The posuk in Shema commands us to love Hashem. How does one get to ahavas Hashem? It is ostensibly a distant and lofty concept? The Sifri says it is by learning Torah. The follow-up of the pesukim in Shema is to be preoccupied with the learning of Torah. It is not just any kind of learning—a total preoccupation—talking in Torah at all times of the day and night—when you sit at home and when you travel. That is how you come to ahavas Hashem.

When we prepare ourselves for Shavuos, there is an awesome responsibility in our being mekabbel the Torah in the right way. The existence of the entire universe depends on it every year on Shavuos. The malochei hashoreis gave us two crowns. They acknowledged that we have the secret to sustaining the universe when we said naaseh venishmah and committed to learn Torah for its own sake. At that moment, everything changed—we tapped into the deepest roots of creation. We have just a few days left to do our maximum to be mekabbel Torah properly before Shavuos.