

פרשת במדבר-חג השבועות

The Gemarah in Shabbat Daf 88 describes what took place when Moshe Rabeinu went up to the Shamayim to bring down the Torah for the Jews. R' Yehoshua Ben Levi says that when the angels in heaven saw Moshe Rabeinu they said to Hashem: "what is this human, born from a woman, doing here"? Hashem answered that he was here to receive the Torah. The angels protested; the coveted treasure (Torah) that has been stored with you for nine hundred and seventy four generations before the creation of the world, you intend to give to flesh and blood?! Hashem said to Moshe; answer them! Moshe replied; "I am afraid that they will burn me with the breath of their mouth! Hashem instructed Moshe to hold on to his throne and answer them. Commencing his argument, Moshe said; "master of the universe, the Torah you are giving me, does it not say "I am Hashem your G-d who took you out of Egypt"?! Moshe turned to the angels and asked; did you go down to Egypt? Were you enslaved by Pharaoh? Obviously not, so why should the Torah be yours?! It also says you shall not worship other G-ds. Do you live amongst the nations who worship idols? It says to keep Shabbat. Do you work during the week that you need to rest on Shabbat?! It says "do not swear falsely". Do you engage in business that would lead you to oaths taken in vain?! It says respect your parents. Do you have parents?! Don't kill, steal, or commit adultery. Is there any jealousy among you that would cause you to do these things?! Do you even have an evil inclination among you?! Immediately the angels conceded to Hashem that the Torah is rightfully Moshe's and should be given to the people.

This is what took place when Moshe went up to retrieve the Torah. We need to analyze this debate in light of who it was between: Moshe Rabeinu and the angels of Hashem! At first glance, the argument of Moshe seems fairly obvious! The Torah simply does not apply to the angels! What were the angels thinking when they challenged Moshe?! Did they not realize that they did not have parents or go down to Egypt etc.?? What exactly did Moshe clarify for them that made them suddenly agree that the Torah was rightfully his?? We must therefore reanalyze the claim of the angles and the response of Moshe Rabeinu.

One interpretation is from the Magid of Dubna who explains this with a parable. There was once a Rabbi of a town who had served loyally for many years. The Rabbi was advancing in age and decided that he would like to move on to a smaller town that would be more tranquil for him. The Rabbi sent a letter to the committee asking them for their permission to be released from his duties so that he can move on. The committee answered that he was free to go and they thanked him for all his hard work throughout the years. When the day came for the Rabbi to move, he found many of the townspeople surrounding his home and they refused to let him go. "What is the meaning of this?" asked the rabbi. "We changed our mind; we do not want you to leave." said the people." "I made all my plans already and I gave the new town my word!" said the Rabbi. He managed to get out of the town, but when he reached the new town he found the committee members of his previous town blocking the entrance in protest. After some commotion they finally allowed the Rabbi to enter. "Why did you do this to me"? asked the Rabbi, I thought we had an agreement? The committee members privately explained to the Rabbi that they were putting up such a fuss to show the new town how valuable he was to them and to make them realize just how special he really was. After all, how would it look if a Rabbi just left town and no one tried to stop him?! We did this so that they should appreciate you!!

The same idea applies here. The angels knew that the Torah was not really for them and they never intended that it should remain in the heaven. The reason they protested, was to show how important and valuable the Torah was, and to make Moshe and the people appreciate it even more!

Another way to explain the debate is that in reality, the angels did not intend to keep the Torah in Shamayim. It was that they wanted to be the ones **to teach** the Torah to the Jews. After all, what better teacher than an angel who knows everything and does not tire! Moshe Rabeinu refused, citing a crucial point in teaching: actions speak louder than words. If a teacher does not practice what he preaches he will be ineffective in instilling the Torah into the hearts of his students. Like it says in Pirkei Avot הוא היה אומר (literally: he used to say) we can also understand it to mean: הוא היה - he **was**, then אומר -then he would say. First he would master the trait, only then would he teach about it.

Moshe was asking the angels; you want to teach about Shabbat, do you keep Shabbat?! You want to teach about respecting parents, do you have parents?! You cannot perform the commandments that you would teach, and therefore you are not fit to be the teachers of the Torah.

This idea is also illustrated by the birth of a baby into this world. Inside the womb there is an angel that teaches the baby the entire Torah. A moment before the baby is born the angel taps the baby above his lip and this causes the baby to forget everything. This area is the dimple above the lip known as the philtrum (the goyim have this on their faces as well, even though they do not study in the womb, this is so as not to make an obvious difference between the faces of the Jews and goyim for anti-Semitic purposes). This tap from the angel coincides with a hormone called: oxytocin, released by the mother during labor which helps the baby forget the trauma of being pushed through the birthing canal and coming into the world. The question is: why does the angel tap the baby? Why not leave him alone and let him be born knowing the entire Torah?! The answer is that we do not want to retain the Torah taught by a teacher who himself does not perform the Mitzvot of the Torah. Therefore better to forget and learn it all over from one who **does** perform the Mitzvot of the Torah.

This rule applies in parenting as well. “Spend less time raising children and more time raising parents”! Meaning, instead of constantly reprimanding and instructing the child, spend more time focusing and perfecting your **own actions**. There is nothing more powerful and influential for a child, then to see his parents acting in the proper manner.

There is a story told of a Rabbi who would try and get his children to recite Birkat Hamazon after their meals. No matter what the Rabbi said to his children, and no matter how much he explained the importance of saying Birkat Hamazon the children would not listen to his words and neglected to recite it. One morning during breakfast the Rabbi received a phone call and became preoccupied and left his house without saying Birkat Hamazon. When he reached the Yeshiva, he realized that he had not said Birkat Hamazon! He went back in his car and drove home to say it. When he got home, his son answered the door and asked his father; what are you doing home?! The Rabbi answered; “I forgot to say Birkat Hamazon so I came back home to say it”.

“You came back home just to say Birkat Hamazon”, exclaimed the son! From then on the children never missed a Birkat Hamazon. Upon witnessing their father’s devotion to the Misvah, it was more powerful than all the logical reasons their father had given them.

Rav Yaakov Kamenatzky comments that this is seen from the Hebrew word “משפיע” (to influence). The שרש (root) of this word is like the word “שיפוע” (incline). Just like a roof that inclines - whatever falls on it automatically rolls off to the ground, so too in order to influence children, parents need to set the example themselves and automatically the children will follow.

Children notice **everything** and therefore we must be vigilant to behave in the manner that we would want our children to follow.

Another understanding to the debate between Moshe and the angels is that the argument of the Angels was that of a law in the Gemarah known as “Bar Metzrah”. The law of Bar Metzrah is that when a man decides to sell his field he must give his the neighbor the first right to purchase it. He is not allowed to sell it to someone else if the neighbor wants to buy it. It was with this law that the angels argued that the Torah should remain in the heaven. The angels were the “neighbors” of the Torah since they were closer to it in the heaven. They therefore objected to Hashem’s giving the Torah to Moshe by stating that they had first rights to the Torah since they were its neighbors.

What was Moshe’s response to this justifiable complaint?

One answer Moshe gave was that the Torah is moveable and the law of Bar Metzrah applies only to property.

Another answer is that the law of Bar Metzrah applies only in the case of a sale but when a person gives his field as a gift, his neighbor does not receive first right. The Torah was given to Moshe as a gift and therefore the law of Bar Metzrah did not apply.

Another answer of Moshe was that actually, it is the **Jews** who are closer to the Torah than the angels. There are four heavenly worlds, they are (in descending order) אצילות, בריאה, יצירה, עשיה. The angels are created in the world of יצירה (as evidenced by the portion in the Shaharit prayers that speak of the angels begins with יוצר אור). Man is created in the higher world of בריאה. This results in man being closer to the Torah and Hashem (which are found in עולם האצילות) than the angels! We are the closer neighbor

of the Torah than the angels! This is hinted to in the prayer of וּבֹא לְצִין when we say: בְּרוּךְ "blessed are you Hashem, who created us for his glory and separated us from those who stray and gave us the true Torah". We now understand it to mean: bless are you Hashem-**שְׁבְרָאנוּ** that created us from the world of **בְּרִיאָה**, and therefore separated us from the **תּוֹעִים**- ones who had erred (the angels), and enabled us to receive the Torah!

Another answer of Moshe was that when an owner of the field is selling it to his partner, the neighbor cannot stop him. Moshe was himself a judge and also established a judicial system for the people. It says in Pirkei Avot that a judge who delivers a true verdict is considered a **שׁוֹתֵף**-partner with Hashem in creating the world. Therefore Moshe argued that he was a "partner" with Hashem and therefore Hashem could give the Torah to him and the law of Bar Metzrah does not apply.

There is an additional point in the debate between Moshe and the angels that needs to be clarified. In arguing that the Torah should remain with them, the angels asked Hashem "you intend to give the Torah to flesh and blood?! Implying that mans inclination to sin is a reason that they should *not* receive the Torah. Part of Moshe's rebuttal to the angels was: "יֵצֵר הָרַע יֵשׁ בֵּינֵיכֶם"- "is there an evil inclination amongst you"?! Isn't it strange that Moshe should use the very same argument of the angels, to answer them?! Is having an evil inclination a reason to **receive** or **not to** receive the Torah?! How could it be used as both??

It says in Pirkei Avot "אִיזְהוּ גִבּוֹר הַכּוֹבֵשׁ אֶת יֵצֵרוֹ"- "who is one that is mighty? One who conquers his evil inclination". The Baal Shem Tov asks: why does it use the word **אִיזְהוּ**- a word that implies that there are different options (as if to say; which option is the best one to be considered mighty)? The Baal Shem Tov answered that in reality there is one of two things a person can do to overcome his Yetser Hara. He can either destroy it or conquer it. What is the difference between destroying and conquering? To destroy something is to obliterate it, but to conquer is to take it and utilize it for your benefit. Like the truly mighty armies, instead of killing the enemy they would capture them and use them as servants. The same idea applies with the Yetser Hara (evil inclination). We must use the Yeser Hara to serve Hashem instead of just destroying it. This is why it says; **הַהוֹרֵג אֶת יֵצֵרוֹ**-to **conquer** his Yeser, as opposed to; **הַהוֹרֵג אֶת יֵצֵרוֹ**-killing it.

How does one use his Yetser Hara to serve Hashem?? By taking the desires and “fire” of his evil inclination and converting it into the excitement and energy to serve Hashem. For example, if a person has a weakness for spending money frivolously, he should convert that into spending money on charities and institutions! The same goes with every Yeser Hara, we have to channel it from bad to good! There was once a Rabbi who was watching his student studying Torah with an overly serious attitude. The Rabbi exclaimed; this boy is not using his Yetser Hara to learn!! He was in a “mechanical” mode where he was not injecting the excitement and vigor of his Yeser Hara into his learning!!

This explains many statements in the Gemarah regarding the Yetser Hara. For example it says: "בראתי יצר הרע בראתי תורה תבלין" - "I created an evil inclination and I created a Torah as an antidote to it". The word תבלין-(antidote) literally means- spice, meaning that the Torah will spice the Yeser Hara. What does this mean? Why doesn't it say that the Torah will obliterate the Yeser Hara? We now understand, that the goal is not to destroy it, it is to rechannel it for good. To spice a food is to alter the flavor and change it. So too, the Torah “spices” the evil inclination and changes it into service of Hashem!

This is also hinted in the 13 methods of R' Yishmael, in which the Torah is expounded from. The 13th principle is; "וכן שני כתובים המכחישים זה את זה עד שיבא הכתוב" - "and the resolution of two verses that contradict each other is that a third verse will come and reconcile them". The word וכן (and also) can also be read וכן **and here**, as if to say; if you've reached here- the 13th principle –(meaning you've learnt the previous 12 principles and have studied the Torah), the 2 verses that contradict each other (meaning the two inclinations- the good and the bad- that seem to contradict each other) can be reconciled. How? From the כתוב השלישי (literally; the third verse) the השלישי alludes to the third month of the year-the month of Sivan that the Torah was given in, and shows us that it is the study of Torah that enables us to “merge the two contradicting verses” (the Yeser Hara with the Yeser Hatov) and use them both to serve Hashem!

R' Yehudah Hanasi began the Mishnayot (and Shas) with the laws of Shema, and he ended it with the words "ה' יברך את עמו בשלום" - "Hashem should bless his nation with peace". The Shema begins with "ואהבת את ה' אלקך בכל לבבך" - "love Hashem with all your heart". The word לבבך-literally means your **hearts** (plural). This means that we

have to love Hashem with both our inclinations, our Yeser Tov and our Yeser Hara. How are we to love Hashem with our evil inclination? By using it to serve Hashem. The last words "ה' יברך את עמו בשלום"-shows us that if one studies and fulfills all that was written will merit to have true peace. What kind of peace? An inner peace, where his two inclinations work together to serve Hashem. R' Yehudah Hanasi began and ended Shas alluding to this concept because only through the study of Torah can a person master the ability to conquer his Yeser.

This concept explains the debate between Moshe and the angels. The angels were complaining that the Jews have a Yeser Hara and will stray from the path of the Torah! Moshe answered that it is precisely the opposite; they will use this very same Yeser Hara to serve Hashem with an even greater power! This is what Moshe meant when he asked the angels if **they** had a Yeser Hara. Since they do not, the Jews can serve Hashem on an even higher level than the angels! This is like a seller who wants to sell his field, but his neighbor is not willing to pay the fair market value. In that case the field owner may sell it to whoever offers the fair market value. So too in this case, the Jews were offering more than the angels, since they will serve Hashem and observe the Torah on a greater level than the angels! Therefore, even using the law of Bar Metzrah, the Torah rightfully could go to the Jews.

This teaches us that we do not need to shun any non spiritual feelings or emotions we may have. We must instead use them in our service of Hashem to turn them around so that they will give us an excitement and “fire” to serve Hashem with a renewed passion! We must do the Mivot with “both of our hearts” and not let our religion become dry and boring Chas Veshalom. May we always stay energized and have the proper thrill and enthusiasm to serve Hashem with great joy and devotion. Amen.