

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn

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A SILENT MESSAGE

Rosh Chodesh Sivan is the day when the Jewish nation arrived at Har Sinai. But surprisingly, while Moshe utilized each of the subsequent days to prepare the *yidden* for Matan Torah, he did not instruct them on Rosh Chodesh at all. The Gemara explains that this was due to their fatigue from the journey to Har Sinai.

This seems hard to understand. The *yidden* were yearning for the day they would receive the Torah, to the extent that when Moshe told them they would be receiving the Torah in fifty days, they counted down the days until the long-awaited moment. All the more so when they actually arrived at Har Sinai; they were certainly interested then in hearing about Matan Torah! How could a bit of tiredness deter them?

The question is twofold: Why didn't Moshe Rabbeinu say anything to them—and as the Gemara's wording implies, he didn't convey even a **single** message—and how could it be that the *yidden* didn't demand from Moshe that he teach them something?!

QUALITIES OF TORAH

To understand this, we must first explain the meaning the statement that the previous encampments were characterized by hostility and quarrels, and only when they arrived at Har Sinai did they camp in unity (*"vayichan"* in the singular tense).

The enmity spoken of here should not be understood as referring to literal quarrelling. Rather, what is meant is that each

individual yearned for Matan Torah in his own unique way.

Torah possesses an unlimited number of special qualities. On a basic level, it contains profound intellectual wisdom; additionally, there is no judicial system as moral as that of the Torah. When

one plumbs the spiritual depths of Torah, one comes to appreciate the divine wisdom of Torah on a myriad of levels. Before arriving at Har Sinai, each person understood and appreciated a different aspect of Torah, and his yearning reflected that particular aspect.

But all this changed when they arrived at the mountain. As soon as they approached this holy location, a new revelation became manifest, even before the Torah was actually given to them (as we say in the Haggadah: "If You would have brought us before Har Sinai and would not have given us the Torah, that itself would have been sufficient"). At that point, the

Torah was revealed to them as it is viewed by **Hashem**, in total contrast to the limited, human-oriented grasp that was within their reach beforehand. When such a level is revealed there are no differences; the encampment was therefore one of unity.

BEYOND WORDS

This new revelation was reflected in the preparation of the Jewish nation on Rosh Chodesh Sivan. The aspects of Torah that are within human grasp require preparation in the form of various specific actions, such as the *mitzvos* of *perishah* and

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hagbalah (separating of couples and placing a boundary around Har Sinai) that took place during the subsequent days. But the aspect of Torah as it is revealed from Above is completely beyond human comprehension; no specific act can serve as an effective preparation for receiving it.

What preparation **can** be performed?

This idea itself—that Torah is essentially beyond our grasp—must be recognized and internalized, and this is accomplished by **abstaining from speech**. Moshe’s silence is not to be understood as a lack of preparation; **this itself** was the way he prepared the *yidden*, by showing them that the essence of Torah is beyond human comprehension and preparation.

(We see this idea in the statement “*Seyag lechachmah shesikah*,” “Silence is a fence to wisdom.” Chassidus explains that although the concept of wisdom is a great level in itself, silence encompasses wisdom and is thus even higher.)

MAKING IT HEARD

A question still begs to be asked. If Torah is truly higher than human intellect, than why did Moshe continue to prepare the *yidden* with the specific actions of *perishah*, *hagbalah*, and so on?

The explanation is that both aspects are necessary. On one hand, before approaching the study of Torah, a person must realize that Torah is the wisdom of Hashem and that through studying Torah he is connecting to an endless depth that surpasses his finite intellect. This is the content of the *berachah* recited before learning Torah—“*asher nassan lanu es toraso*,” “**He** has given us **His** Torah” (as the Bach explains at length). But afterward, when it comes to the actual learning, he must use his intellect to actually understand what he is learning according to **his** individual comprehension and ability.

And for this reason, Matan Torah involved two distinctive methods of preparation. First and foremost, the *yidden* needed to recognize that Torah is something beyond human grasp,

and this idea was instilled in them through Moshe’s silence and refraining to teach them even a single thought. This prepared them to receive the higher level of Torah. But we must study and understand Torah to the best of our ability as well, and this aspect of Torah was received through the specific preparations on the days following Rosh Chodesh.

OUR TORAH

These two ideas are expressed in the opening words of the *aseres hadibros*. The *aseres hadibros* begin with the word “*Anochi*,” “I,” referring to Hashem Himself. The Torah is connected with Hashem’s essence, as the Gemara tells us that *Anochi* is an acronym for *ana nafshi kesavis yehavis*—“I have inscribed Myself into the Torah.”

But Hashem doesn’t want this level to remain separate from a *yid*; He desires that the unlimited depth of Torah should penetrate the human intellect. This is why the *possuk* continues with the words “*Hashem Elokecha*.” These are names of Hashem that express levels beneath Hashem’s essence. This is especially so with the name *Elokim* which is written in the plural, and specifically in this *possuk* where the suffix “*Elokecha*”—“**your** G-d”—is added to the name. This demonstrates that this sublime level must not remain

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abstract; it must descend and become integrated into each individual person’s capacity and grasp.

For further learning see לקו"ש חלק כ"ח - ר"ח סיון

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