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## Shavuos - 029 The Spiritual Light of Shavuos

### ***The Two Levels of Learning and Receiving The Torah***

The three days preceding the festival of Shavuos are called 'the days of *Hagbalah*,' the time where we prepare for receiving the Torah.

Our Sages state that when learning Torah, there are two stages. First we learn it in a cursory manner ("*ligras*", or "*ligmar*"), and then we learn it with in-depth and analytical understanding ("*lisbar*"). Just as this is true with learning Torah, so is this true with how we must *receive* the Torah. First a person receives the Torah in the manner of "*ligras*", and then he must receive it in the deeper manner, which is called "*lisbar*".

It can happen that a person is even learning Torah on the level of '*lisbar*', but his actual level of '*receiving*' the Torah is still at the elementary level of '*ligras*'. There is supposed to first be a level of '*ligras*' in receiving the Torah that is reached, and then a person can reach the receiving of the Torah on the level of '*lisbar*'.

Let us try to understand what the inner layer of receiving the Torah is, which is called '*lisbar*'.

### ***'Lisbar': The Higher Revelation of Torah***

The *Nefesh HaChaim* says that the Torah emanates from the uppermost spiritual realms, and extends downward, all the way until the lowest realm, which is this 'world of action'. Therefore, there are levels of receiving Torah, and not everyone is experiencing the same level of receiving the Torah.

Every year, the spiritual light contained in the festival of Shavuos returns at this time of the year, the time when the Torah was given, and a person has the chance to receive the Torah anew each year - according to the level of Torah that he is currently at. Every person is therefore able to receive a higher level of Torah than last year.

When someone is at the more perfected level of receiving the Torah, he receives the higher level of Torah when Shavuos comes - a level of Torah which purifies his entire being.

But if someone is not connected to that level of perfection, he receives Torah on the level he is currently at, which is limited to the low spiritual level he is at. When a person never reflects and he never thinks into this concept, it's very possible that his level of receiving the Torah is at the lowest possible level to receive it on.

We will try to give some examples of how we can conceptualize the perfected level of receiving the Torah, but this does not mean that a person who never reaches the perfect level is exempt from trying to reach it. Every person needs to understand that there is such a depth to the Torah that exists, and he must try to reach it as much as he can, on his own level.

### ***The Torah Is Called 'Woman of Valor'***

During the three days of *Hagbalah* that precede the giving of the Torah, the Jewish nation was commanded by Hashem to refrain from marital intimacy. The simple understanding of this is, as the *Gemara* explains, that they had to be ritually pure in order to receive the Torah. But the deeper understanding is as follows.

The *Gemara* elsewhere says that night is for sleep, while day is for learning Torah; whereas Torah scholars fend off sleep so they can learn Torah at night. The power to have exertion in Torah study – where does it come from? How is a person able to do it? The superficial understanding of the matter is that just like a person can learn Torah at day, so can he learn it at night. By nature we get tired at night, but a person can fight this nature and stay up at night to learn Torah.

That is the simple understanding of how Torah scholars fend off sleep from their eyes in order to stay up at night and learn Torah. But there is a deeper understanding of this matter.

Adam was put to sleep and then Chavah was created. We see from this that there is a connection between the concepts of 'sleep' and 'woman.' Now we can understand the deeper the depth behind the commandment we had at Har Sinai to refrain from marital relations: we were told to stay away from woman, from the idea of "sleep", so that we could return to the level of mankind before the creation of woman - when man was alone with Hashem.

Chazal state, "Therefore, man is created individual". Although we have a *mitzvah* to be married, the inner state of the soul is to be 'individual', to be able to live without woman – to be alone, with Hashem.

This is the soul's deep power to connect to the Torah on the level of "*Aishes Chayil*" ("woman of valor"). The Torah is called the '*Aishes Chayil*' - just as woman bears children with man, so does the Torah bear children with man - through producing *Chiddushei Torah*.

So we were commanded at Har Sinai to abstain from woman, to abstain from having any "sleep" to our eyes - and to return to our original state, the nature of our soul, of being 'individual', where the Torah is called our "*Aishes Chayil*".

But in order to get to such an intimate connection with the Torah, a person has to enter the Torah, with all of the depths of the soul – and to do, he must be able to disconnect from the materialistic lifestyle of the world around him.

This is an example of what it means to have deep acceptance of the Torah, and it is far from most people; but this is the example.

### ***Torah - Beyond Space, Time, and Soul***

Here is another example that can help us get to the inner level of receiving the Torah.

There is a well-known concept of our Sages called "*Olam, Shanah, Nefesh*" (World, Time, and Soul), that every concept exists on the three planes of space, time, and soul. [The Torah is above all of these three planes, however. It is above all space, it is above all time, and it is above our souls.]

Receiving the Torah, in its complete form, is connected to the concept of how “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world.” The Torah came before creation; Hashem looked into it to create the world. So it is above space and time. It also preceded the creation of man, so it is above the soul as well.

When a person merits to penetrate deeply into his soul, he can go above time and space, and above his own soul as well; he receives the Torah there, at its complete level, at the level of Torah before the creation of the world.

All of this was present when we stood at Har Sinai. The Sages state that when we stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, Hashem first opened up all the layers of heaven and showed us “*Ain Od Milvado*”, the deep revelation that “there is nothing besides for Him”. This was clearly not just for the purpose of performing a miracle of opening the heavens. It was to show us that Torah came before the world. It was the stunning revelation to us that the Torah came before this world.

We count 49 days of *Sefiras HaOmer*, but the day of the giving of the Torah, which is the 50<sup>th</sup> day, is not counted. The depth of this is because Torah it is above time.

We find this revealed as well in terms of our soul: our souls left us at every word of Hashem that we heard at Sinai<sup>[1]</sup> [1]. It was because the Torah is *above* our soul, therefore our souls could not bear its light.

There is exertion in Torah, physical exertion in Torah, which we must have. That is one level of receiving the Torah: preparing for it by exerting ourselves in its study. But the more complete level of Torah is reflected in the words of our Sages, “One must ‘kill’ himself, in the tents of Torah.” It means to be at the level of standing at Sinai - when our souls left us. This is the depth of how we see that Torah is above our soul.

It was above all space as well, for Hashem opened all the heavens and showed us the Torah; in other words, it is above the world - it is above any place. It is also above all of time, as we see from the fact that the day of the giving of the Torah is not counted in *Sefiras HaOmer*. And it is above our soul, for our souls left us at Sinai when we heard it.

When we understand this properly, we can perceive that “receiving the Torah” is essentially for one to leave the sphere of human comprehension; to leave place, time, and soul; to leave all of man’s own *hasagah* (comprehension); to leave the entire life he recognizes.

As long as a person remains connected to his current level of life and he does not know how to aspire beyond it, he can only receive the Torah from where he stands - which will be very limited.

### ***Shavuos: Returning To The State of Pre-Sin***

The day of receiving the Torah, in a certain way, is the loftiest day of the year. This is because throughout the year, we are in the state of after the sin of Adam. But once every year, when it comes the festival of Shavuos, we return to the level of before the sin of Adam; because when we stood at Sinai, the spirit of impurity that had been on us since the first sin was removed. That spiritual light returns to us every year on Shavuos.

(On a more subtle note, there are really two points in time during the year in which we return to the state of pre-sin: Friday afternoon, which was the time in Creation where Adam didn’t sin yet; and on Shavuos, when we were rectified from the sin of Adam, and it was before we sinned with the Golden Calf.)

The time of the giving of the Torah is the day of the year that is designated specially for the Jewish people, when Hashem set us apart from the other nations in giving us the Torah. It is the day of the year that is unique to the Jewish people. It is also the day in which we return to the pre-sin. It is the holy day of the year in which it is revealed a world in which there is no reality of sin. It is the one day of the year where the soul can connect itself to a level beyond where it normally is.

How can our soul go beyond its normal level? When our soul deeply connects to Torah and to its Giver that is found in it, Hashem, it can go above the normal constraints of place and time (and itself).

### ***Shavuos: The Higher Revelation of Torah That Is Above The Self***

Normally, during the rest of the year, there is exertion in Torah, in which one strives to reach his own place in the Torah, which is reached through his own *hasagah* (comprehension). During the rest of the year, each person strives to reach his *individual* portion in the Torah, his own place in Torah that's unique to him, which he reaches through toiling to understand it.

But on Shavuos, the time of the giving of the Torah, which is above all time and place and soul, it is the day where we *all* received the Torah, thus there is a level of Torah revealed on this day that goes *above* the individual's role in Torah. It reveals a level of Torah that is on a higher and collective level, as opposed to a Torah on the individual level.

When searching to reach true level of Torah, firstly, we have an *avodah* to reveal more and more Torah upon the world, exerting ourselves day and night in it, each of us trying to reach our own *hasagah* in it. When it comes to this, each person can come to his own revelation of Torah, using his own intellect and soul; each person has an individual place in the Torah, which he can reach through exerting himself in it.

But on Shavuos, a level of Torah that is above the individual is revealed. If one is truly connected to that place, he connects to the Torah that is above his normal *hasagah*.

Therefore, the depth of "receiving the Torah" is not just to exert ourselves in it and try to understand it. It is to connect to it in a way that reflects the statement, "To part from it, I cannot" - to deeply connect to it.

That is the true spiritual light contained in the festival of Shavuos.

### ***'Exile' of the Soul***

As we are in exile, our own soul is in exile as well. It is 'exiled' in two ways.

Firstly, it is exiled by the bad *middos* that tarnish its outer layers. The days of *Sefiras HaOmer* come to rectify our bad *middos* and can help us come out of the inner imprisonment which bad *middos* place us in.

But the other aspect of the soul's exile, which is a deeper kind of inner exile, is the fact that each person only seeks to understand his own personal comprehension in Torah. This limits and constricts a person to the level of his own individual understanding.

When we stood at Sinai, we all stood "with one heart". The exile of the soul, on a deeper level, is that each person is stuck within himself, and he is not unified with others.

Currently, our level of "receiving of the Torah" is at the level of the second *Luchos*, which contain a drawback: it is a Torah that is individually understood, each person according to his own

understanding. But the truer understanding of Torah, the Torah we received with the first set of *Luchos* (which is contained in the festival of Shavuos that returns each year), is the level of Torah that goes beyond our own personal level of *hasagah*. It was the kind of Torah that was given to all of us collectively, as opposed to individually.

The festival of Shavuos reveals a point that is above the level of our souls, so we can return to the level of pre-sin every Shavuos. We cannot reach it perfectly, though; only in the times of *Mashiach* will we live in it totally. But although we cannot reach it perfectly and we cannot live it, we can still have some access to its light, by directing our lives towards it.

We can direct our lives towards this point of perfection that exists above all space, time, and soul - by *yearning* for it. In that way, we are at least somewhat connected to it.

### ***Leaving “Katnus” and Entering “Gadlus”***

When one lives a life of *katnus* (small-mindedness) and he thinks this is “life”, and that is the greatest “*katnus*” possible.

The words here were not meant to inspire you to live on such a high level like this all the time. That would be impossible. The point of hearing these words is so that we can inspire ourselves to take ourselves out of a perspective of *katnus* towards life, and bring us closer to a “*gadlus*” kind of life.

### ***Striving Towards Perfection***

It should be our aspiration to try to connect to this higher level of Torah, by disconnecting somewhat from being limited to our own individual existence, and to try to connect ourselves to a plane that goes beyond our personal understanding.

Again, we cannot live this concept totally. But we can be headed towards it; we can strive towards it. “*Sof maaseh, b’machshavah techilah*” - “The end of actions, is first with thought.” The goal, the “end of actions”, can still be in the background of our minds, even though we are not there yet at that point of perfection.

We can know that although we cannot reach this level totally as we live on This World, we can still yearn for it, and thus be somewhat connected to it. (We have Shabbos, which only ‘resembles’ *Olam HaBa*, and it is not the actual *Olam HaBa* itself). We must know clearly where we should want to get to - a point above time and space and soul that is perfect and above our own individual existence.

Of course, one should not delude himself and think that he is on this high level we described. Nor should a person feel that the words here do not speak to him at all. Rather, we can know exactly where we stand right now, along with aspirations to get to the highest levels, yearning for that great perfection.[\[2\]](#) [2]

### ***In Conclusion***

I hope that the words here have spoken to you and given you a greater feeling of connection to the Torah, and that your souls should become directed towards this point of perfection described.

May all of return to that place perfectly - saying “*Naaseh V’Nishmah*” all at once.

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[1] [3] Shabbos 88a

[2] [4] See also **Tefillah #018 - To Live In A Perfect Place**, and **Tefillah #045 - To Yearn For A Pure World**.

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