

Parshat Yitro: The Experience of Sinai

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

There is a perplexing Gemara in Shabbat that recounts Hashem's threat to the Jewish people at Sinai. He said if they would not accept the Torah, they would be buried beneath the mountain. It seems as if *Klal Yisrael* were forced to accept the *mitzvot*. In addition, most of the Torah was not even given at Sinai. It was received in *Arvat Moav* before the Jews crossed into the land of Israel. Why then is the experience at Sinai considered such a pivotal event in Jewish history?

The Ramban points out that the whole focus of the giving of the Torah at Sinai was for the Jews to attain awe of Hashem. The Meshech Chochma further explains that Hashem appeared to them in such a wondrous way that it was as if he placed the mountain over their head. They were so overwhelmed that they had no choice but to accept the Torah.

The Gra finds the entire Torah in the word *Bereishit*, which contains two words *yarei*, to be afraid, and *boshet*, a sense of humbleness. *Yirat ha'aretz* signifies fear of punishment. But there's a higher fear of *yirat shamayim* which is standing in awe of the One Above. It says that the Jews stood at Sinai with *busha* – a feeling of puniness in contrast to Hashem's grandeur. A brazen person is one who is unwilling to accept advice from others. In contrast, a *boshet panim* (one who is humble) has the ability to constrict his desires and seek guidance from others who will help him grow. The experience

at *maamad har Sinai* instilled within the Jews an intense feeling of humility, of wanting to learn and grow and continuously ascend.

Our actions are a reflection of who we are. The Rema writes that if we would keep in mind at every moment of our life that we are standing in Hashem's presence, then our actions would be entirely different. One should think, "What are the small things I can do to remind myself of the Higher presence in my world." That's taking the Sinai experience, the *busha* and reverence, and bringing it into your life.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe teaches that most human anxiety comes from fear of annihilation. When one views the material world as the only world that exists one is bound to feel fear. If one's life is built on a temporary foundation one cannot expect to feel secure. In truth, we have nothing to fear but Hashem. Nothing is as real as Him. When a person feels despondent or afraid, he should think, "What does Hashem want from me at this moment?" The *az panim* (arrogant person) says what matters is what others think of me. The *boshet panim* says, "What matters is how I grow as an individual in the world Hashem has placed me and in the challenges that He gave me." *Busha* doesn't mean fear of punishment but rather a deeper level of understanding.

The Ramchal says that at Sinai, Hashem instilled within us the ability and the natural inclination to want to carry out His will. Rav Tatz notes that *mitzvah* comes from the root

word *zavta*, to join. The Sefat Emet further explains that when we make Hashem's will our will we become closer with him. Mt Sinai gave us the strength to take the material world, imbue it with sanctity, and create spiritual worlds with it. Rav Aviner points out that the imagery of the mountain over their head wasn't coercion. It was Hashem explaining to them a reality. Now that they'd experienced Sinai they would now have that spiritual aspect of closeness to Hashem and the ability to effect tremendous cosmic changes.

Rav Gifter asks, why did Hashem tell the Jews if they will not accept the Torah, "*Sham tehei k'vuratchem*," there will be your burial place. Should it not have said here? He answers that Hashem meant to say, in that place where you failed to teach your children, there you will bury them. When we transmit the experience of Sinai to our children we have to convey both the voice and the fire. But before one can teach the voice of Sinai one must teach the fire of Sinai. The voice is *V'halachata b'drachav*, "the Torah approach to life. The fire is consistency, a sense of divine mission, and an abundance of passion and love. Being consistent means modeling what one teaches in all aspects of life. Teachers and parents must consider themselves messengers of Hashem. They must impart a love for the material they teach and a love for their students. May we merit to transmit to our children the warmth, the meaning, and the beauty of Torah.

Hilchot Shabbat III: Tea on Shabbat

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

The Mishna Berura discusses the laws of cooking tea leaves on Shabbat. The Shulchan Aruch rules like Rabbeinu Tam that *iruy keli rishon* (pouring from a first vessel) onto food, is *mevashel kedei klipa* (cooks the outside layer), and is prohibited on Shabbat. It follows that it is a Torah prohibition to pour hot water from an urn onto tea leaves. Similarly, the Mishna Berura rules that one cannot pour from a *keli rishon* onto spices. One should not prepare tea in a *keli sheni* (second vessel) either as tea is considered *kalei habishul* (cooks easily) and there are also the factors

of *mechzi k'mevushal* (it looks like cooking) and *yad nichvat bo* (it is scalding hot).

The Achronim rule that one should place the tea leaves into a cup before Shabbat and then pour from the *keli rishon* on to the leaves so that it cooks *kedei klipa*. One should make sure to flip the leaves while pouring so the water goes over all the leaves. The liquid should then be poured off and the leaves should be allowed to dry. On Shabbat one can then pour from a hot urn onto the cooked tea leaves because *Ein bishul acher bishul b'davar*

yavesh (The prohibition of cooking does not apply to a dry cooked food). If some liquid still remains then one should not do this as *Yesh bichul acher bishul b'daver lach* (The prohibition of re-cooking applies to a liquid). The same law relates to coffee. One may not pour from a *keli rishon* onto coffee grounds unless they were cooked before Shabbat and allowed to dry. Even though one can reuse the dry cooked tea leaves, one may not put the cup of tea on a covered stove. The leaves were only cooked *kedei klipa* before Shabbat and this would cook them completely.

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The best option is to make tea essence, a very high level of concentrated tea, before Shabbat. One can then pour hot water into a *keli sheni* and then add the essence. There's a disagreement among the Achronim whether putting essence into clear water may violate the prohibition of *tzoveah* (coloring). We generally assume *Tzoveah* does not apply to food.

The Mishna Berura and the Aruch Hashul-

chan rule that if tea is *kalei habeshul* then it will also cook in a *keli shelishi* (third vessel). Rav Moshe Feinstein disagrees. He explains that what one sees in a *keli shelishi* is not cooking but pigmentation or flavoring of the water. Therefore, he rules that there's no prohibition of *bishul* in a *keli shelishi*. He cites proof that the Gemara gives us cases of *bishul* in *keli sheni* but it never mentions a *keli shelishi* because there's no prohibition of *bishul* there. In addition, the Gemara tells us

that one is permitted to cook with the sun on Shabbat. Rashi explains that it is not considered *bishul* because it is not the normal way of cooking. While cooking *kalei habeshul* in a *keli sheni* is not unusual, cooking in a *keli shelishi* is. Therefore it is permitted. The Chazon Ish and many other Acharonim takes issue with this position. So while some people will make tea in a *keli shelishi* following the opinion of Rav Moshe, many others will prepare tea essence before Shabbat.

Father of a Movement: R' Yisrael Salanter, Part 2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

In 1845, a century after the Chassidic revolution, Rav Yisrael Salanter outlined his program for ethical rejuvenation of traditional Judaism. Chassidut elevated Judaism from the depths and transformed it into something vibrant and alive. Rav Salanter hoped that Mussar would do the same for Lithuanian Jewry. He envisioned the defeat of the Enlightenment, not by attack or by disputes, but through the inner reconstruction of the traditional camp on superior ethical and behavioral standards.

Much like Chassidut, the language and outer garb of Mussar was new, but its inner core was as old as Sinai. The Torah teaches us to be ethical, but somehow this area had fallen into neglect. Rav Yisrael set out to correct this. He was acutely aware of traditional Jewry's social and educational failings. His philosophy was, "First repair yourself and then reach out to others." He advocated caring about other people's material wellbeing. This in turn would affect their spiritual level.

Rav Salanter advocated that *Mussar* should be studied in a *beit hamussar*, a room

allocated for the purpose. The teachings were meant to be intoned with lips aflame, with a haunting tune that would carve the words into one's heart.

Someone once asked Rav Salanter's wife if she found it difficult to live in the presence of such a towering *tzaddik*. She replied that there had never been a problem at all. From the beginning of their marriage Rav Yisrael laid down a very clear rule, all material matters were to be her province and all heavenly matters would be his province. In the course of time she discovered that with Rav Salanter everything was heavenly. There was nothing physical in his realm that was divorced from its spiritual connection.

Before his students went to bake *matzot*, they asked Rav Yisrael what stringencies to follow. He told them to be careful to keep the bakery clean and not to raise their voices. The proprietor of the bakery was a widow and if they caused her anguish all their good intentions would be lost.

One Friday night a Jew invited Rav Salanter to his *seudah*. When they arrived home, he

noticed that the *challot* were uncovered. He called out sharply to his wife. She quickly defended herself by saying that she had been about to cover them. Rav Salanter asked his host, "Why do we cover the *challot*?" He answered, "Everyone knows that it is in order not to shame them." Rav Salanter then countered, "Is shaming your wife ok?"

The Gemara teaches that the more water one pours for *netilat yadayim*, the more blessing one brings down from heaven. Rav Salanter once attended a wedding where he poured just enough water to meet the minimum standards. He explained, "I cannot be stringent on the water carrier's account."

Rav Salanter taught, "There's only one person in the world I can rectify and that person is me." His idea to create a mass ethical movement that would change people's lives did not materialize. However, he did succeed in imparting his legacy to several prime students who later went on to found the three leading schools of Mussar: Slabodaka, Novardok, and Kelm.