

The Meron Tragedy

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

There's been a whole year of finger-pointing. Whose fault was it? Why were the emergency people not there? Why were the police trying to close the area? I don't think it's important to dwell on these issues. Of course, things should be improved. There shouldn't be any physical possibility for this to happen again. But that's not what it's all about. The Meron Tragedy wasn't the first calamity that happened in Israel, but it touched everyone because it was so incomprehensible. The whole calamity took a very short time. First, everything was fine and within a few minutes, it was all over. It's almost impossible to make sense of it and there's very little to say, except two things.

First, there's a difference between the fate of the Jews as a group and as individuals. On a collective level, we are told in the Torah that we will be rewarded for our good deeds and punished for our sins. But on an individual level, we can't make interpretations. When Hashem showed Moshe Rabbeinu, Rabbi Akiva's death, he asked, "Is this Torah and is this its reward?" Hashem replied, "Be silent..." Why did Hashem show him the whole thing to begin with? He wanted to tell him -As high as you go there will be doors you won't be able to open and if you claim you can, it will lead to illusion. This world is meant to be a balance between revelation and concealment. The reason why a specific person suffers and

another one doesn't is not something we can answer. Everyone has their specific purpose for being and is given everything they need to achieve that purpose. On a concrete level, this means everything that happens is for the good.

Secondly, no one can force Hashem's hand. People are limited, but for Hashem everything is possible. Even if the stairs were wet and even if someone tripped, there were other possibilities. But Hashem chose this one, and for every single person who was there, that was the best possible outcome for them.

A Balanced Life Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Justin Treger

There's an incredible Mechilta in Chapter 15, verse 26- "... If you listen carefully to the voice of Hashem and you do that which is straight in His eyes and you listen to his commandments, his ordinances, all the sickness which are placed in Egypt, I won't place upon you ..." There are three commandments here, to learn the *Torah* and keep the *mitzvot* and in between Hashem asks us to do what is straight in His eyes. The Mechilta explains, this refers to doing business and the verse is teaching us that if you conduct your business with integrity and *emunah*, Hashem will consider it as if you fulfilled the entire *Torah* and the reward will be equivalent. That is why it is placed in between learning *Torah* and fulfilling *mitzvot*. The end goal to keeping the *Torah* is achieved through doing business in a way that is straight in the eyes of Hashem. But there are conditions. You have to do business with *emunah*, trust in Hashem and the way you are able to measure

that is if people are satisfied with you. Going to work is not just about the mundane goal of making money or putting bread on the table. If done right, it can be a central part of *avodat Hashem*.

Rabbeinu Yonah quotes the following *Avot D'Rav Nosson* in the first chapter of *Pirkei Avot*. "Shammai says, 'Make your *Torah* a fixed part of your day...' and the *Avot D'Rav Nosson* says, someone who makes their *Torah* primary in life and their work secondary, will be made primary in the World to Come; and someone who makes work their primary obsession and *Torah* secondary, will be made secondary in the World to Come. Meaning, in the next world, your place is determined by your level of relationship to *Torah*. How do we understand this in light of what was mentioned before?

The *Avot D'Rav Nosson* says it can be

compared to a troop of soldiers who are traversing near two paths, one of fire and one of snow. If they walk too close to the path of fire they will be burned. If they walk too close to the path of snow they will be frostbitten. So, what should this troop do? They should walk between the two paths and be exceptionally careful not to turn too much to the left nor to the right, so that they don't get burned or frostbitten. So too, you have to strike the perfect balance in your life where you tread down the middle path, because either extreme can be dangerous to your *avodat Hashem*. On that middle road, if you conduct your business in a way which is straight in the eyes of Hashem, then it will be considered as if you kept the entire *Torah*. If you make *Torah* a primary and fundamental part of your life while doing business, it can be elevated to a medium of ultimate connection and relationship with Hashem.

Preparing for Shavuot

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

The *yomim tovim* are discussed in the *Torah* five times. Each time it's mentioned, it teaches us another aspect of the *yom tov*. In *Vayikra* it says, "U'sefartem lachem... sheva shabbatot temima tiyehene ad mimacharat hasheviit .. Neither the name of the *yom tov* nor the date nor that the *Torah* was given then is mentioned. The weeks are called *shabbatot*. Usually, we refer to *Shabbat* as the 7th day. Here the whole week is called *Shabbat*. It must be seven full weeks and its written in plural form (*us'efartem lachem*). In *Parshat Emor*, *Shavuot* is again mentioned. There it's written in the singular form, the weeks are called *Shavuot*, the common word for weeks and the word *temimut* is not mentioned.

In *Shemot*, the chapter before the *Aseret Hadibrot*, Hashem tells *Klal Yisrael* what *Kabalat HaTorah* will be about. He says, "And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation..." The key words are, "And you shall be to me...." That is what *kabalat HaTorah* was about. *Shavuot* was the wedding and at *Matan Torah* we became the bride of Hashem. Marriage is a kind of nullification. A single person is independent and can do what he wants. Married people make decisions together and sometimes one must nullify his will for the other. This makes two into one so that whatever one has the other has. Under the *chuppah*, the man does the act of *kiddushin* and so there is a nullification on the side of the woman in the

relationship. The same principle applies with Hashem.

Chazal say when a person says *Vayichulu* on Friday night, he becomes a partner with Hashem in creation. What does that mean? If we nullify our will before Hashem's will, we become one with Him as in a marriage and it follows that whatever He has I have. This means we have the ability to become divine like, to possess the same qualities Hashem has, on a human level. This is the meaning of, "V'davka bo -To cling to Him." When we become one with Hashem, we gain capacities that are beyond the human level.

At *Har Sinai*, *Klal Yisrael* nullified themselves to Hashem. They said, "We will do and we will hear." At *Matan Torah*, Hashem gave us the ability to experience something beyond this world. All of *Klal Yisrael* experienced a revelation close to the level that Moshe Rabbeinu experienced. Hashem opened up for them the seven heavens, the depths of the earth, they saw the soul of all of creation. We are told to remember this. We are waiting to come back to this reality when *Mashiach* comes. That first *Shavuot*, *Klal Yisrael* nullified themselves to Hashem and He then gifted them and elevated them to a level beyond description. The foundation of *Klal Yisrael* was laid down then and it had to be very strong and clear. Therefore, Hashem gave them this experience so that they had total clarity about

Hashem running the world, the purpose of creation, who they were and what they were meant to accomplish. This is why the 7 weeks are called *shabbatot*. *Shabbat* is a gift. Adam didn't do anything to deserve it. So too *Matan Torah* was a heavenly gift that was necessary to set the foundation for *Klal Yisrael*. That is why the pasuk uses the plural form as the nation as a whole needed to experience it. It also uses the term *temimot* -perfect. Humans are by nature imperfect, only Hashem can give us something perfect. We got a divine experience that was perfect.

And as we know, a *yom tov* is not just a remembrance. It contains within it the energy and potential that existed then which we can tap into now as well. Every *Shavuot* Hashem gives us the ability to experience *Kabalat HaTorah* again. But there's a difference between what happened in the first generation and what happens every *Shavuot*. The first experience was a gift. Now we need to make it happen. Achieving oneness with Hashem is a great challenge. That is why the preparation is longer and more intense than any *yom tov*. In order for two surfaces to cling to each other they must be very clean. If we want to cling to Hashem, we must cleanse ourselves of all our negative *middot*. That is why we are given 7 weeks, each week is dedicated to one *midda*, seven pathways to emulating Hashem, so that we can come to *Shavuot* purified and ready to accept the *Torah*.