

# SHAVUOS

תשפ"ו

This week is kabbolas haTorah.

3,500 years ago, Klal Yisroel were mekabbel the Torah on Shavuos, and every year, Klal Yisroel accepts it again.

Klal Yisroel went through a lot of dramatic events before reaching this point. They went through the ten makkos, with Makkas Bechoros being the climax. Then they went through kriyas Yam Suf. It was an incredible educational process.

At this point before receiving the Torah, Moshe was told to convey a special message to Klal Yisroel. You have at least three million people moving through the desert. They traversed a tremendous distance to reach Har Sinai. Hashem says He brought us there on eagle's wings. In Egypt Klal Yisroel were gathered from all over the country in one day to Ramses – which is on the eastern side of the Nile Delta. How did that happen? Hashem is arranging things in a way that Klal Yisroel recognize is above natural law. As they move from place to place and go through kriyas Yam Suf, it is all open nissim. It is clear that the goal of everything until now is to bring Klal Yisroel to this place at this moment.

Hashem says: If you listen to My voice and keep My bris, you will be My treasured nation. You will be a mamleches kohanim and a goy kodosh. The whole point of this entire process is to turn Klal Yisroel into a unique and special people that is completely different from all other nations on a fundamental level. Each nation has its own national identity and character. A certain culture with its values and attitudes and ways of expressing itself. Which culture binds Klal Yisroel as its national identity and character? It is being a mamleches kohanim and goy kodosh. That's the point of everything. This is the message Hashem sends to Klal Yisroel through Moshe Rabbeinu.

Klal Yisroel responds – to everything Hashem tells us – we will listen. There is some back-and-forth between Hashem and Moshe, and finally, Hashem declares that all of Klal Yisroel will hear Hashem's voice through a direct nevuah. They themselves will hear that Moshe has been authorized by Hashem to give the Torah and convey His instructions to Klal Yisroel. This is how Moshe Rabbeinu's nevuah will never be doubted in the future. All Jews throughout history can say with complete confidence that our ancestors stood at the foot of Har Sinai and heard Hashem tell Moshe to give His Torah to us. There is an unbroken chain of transmission of the entire Jewish people from generation to generation – from father to son and rebbe to talmid going all the back. We all heard Hashem speak to us at Har Sinai.

Hashem tells Moshe to make three days of preparation. It will finish on the sixth of Sivan. And to commemorate this in our time, there is no tachanun in davening for the three days before Shavuos. But why is Klal Yisroel's preparation 3,500 years ago relevant to us today? Obviously it is because we are also preparing for our own kabbolas haTorah and we need the same three days to prepare.

What does it mean to prepare for kabbolas haTorah?

The gemara in Shabbos says you don't do anything risky during this time before Shavuos. Why not? Because right now, the world is in a very dangerous situation. Hashem is sitting and deliberating about continuing the existence of the world. It will depend on our kabboloh on Shavuos morning. If we accept the Torah properly, Hashem will allow the world to continue. If we don't, the world reverts to tohu and bohu.

Just like the world was held in abeyance 3,500 years ago at the first kabbolas haTorah, the world is held in abeyance now as well until our kabbolas haTorah.

The ma'amad of Har Sinai was an unbelievable experience. The Ramban says it has two components: The fire of Sinai and the voice of Sinai. This overwhelming experience was drilled so deeply within Klal Yisroel, that they were able to lift themselves and achieve a level of nevuah one notch below Moshe Rabbeinu himself. They saw the truth of Hashem and the true reality. Most nevi'im were so overwhelmed by nevuah that their physical bodies couldn't function and they went into a trance. Only Moshe Rabbeinu was able to have a nevuah while maintaining complete consciousness and complete control over his body. But at Har Sinai, all of Klal Yisroel were fully awake and conscious. Why? In order to instill emunoh properly, you have to maintain full clarity about what is going on and what you are experiencing. You can see with certainty that there is no other koach other than Hashem.

Hashem did this once in history. We don't have this same personal clarity directly. But we have the clarity of all our ancestors faithfully passed down to us by the entire nation in every generation, and we can trust our mesorah. Rav Yehudah Halevi in the Kuzari makes a striking observation. All other religions boil down to trusting a single individual about what he says he experienced – alone. Islam is based on Mohammad's claim about what happened to him that night he traveled to Mecca – with no witnesses. Christianity is based on individuals' claim of what happened in private. It is very easy for individuals to lie and convince others that it happened. But here with the Torah, the claim is that an entire nation witnessed something, and in each generation following, that same entire nation testified to the next generation that it happened. For this to be a lie, an entire generation would have to coordinate perfectly and to decide to fabricate the same lie to all of their children. It is very unreasonable to think this would happen. It isn't just a father telling a myth or fable to his son in isolation. Everybody can cross-check their story with everyone else's story and they all are being told the same exact history by their fathers.

Hashem set up ma'amad Har Sinai in a way that it couldn't be seriously questioned or doubted for all future generations. The Creator of the entire Universe came down and spoke to this nation, giving us a special mission and a special relationship. This is why He created everything from nothing.

Sometimes, people take our special mission and our special relationship with Hashem for granted. It sometimes takes a while for us to realize how amazing it is and how much it should be cherished and appreciated. We think it's nothing special, and we keep moving on to the next thing and the next thing to grab our attention. We don't stop and think about how Hashem comes to each and every one of us and wants us to make a connection to Him through His Torah.

Klal Yisroel went through so many open nissim, and came to the realization that there is no other power in the world besides Hashem, and for some reason, He has a special interest in us. And it was not just 'us' as a collective, but 'us' as individuals. As we spoke last week about the counting of Klal Yisroel, our unique individuality is never erased by the collective. In the parsha, we read that the people were counted by their names. Hashem wants us to develop our own individual way of relating to Hashem.

The process of geirus started in Egypt with bris miloh. But as we say

