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The Relationship Forged at Sinai

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In Parashas Yisro, we encounter the *parashah* describing the events of *Maamad Har Sinai*. Bnei Yisroel arrive at Sinai on Rosh Chodesh Sivan, and they are encamped there "כאיש אחד בלב אחד". Moshe Rabbeinu ascends to Hashem, Who calls to him and tells him the following: כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְתַגֵּיד לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרָיִם וָאֶשָּׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל־כַּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים וָאָבֵא אֶתְכֶם אֵלָי: וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ בְּקֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־בְּרִיתִי וִהְיִיתֶם לִי סְגֻלָּה מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים כִּי־לִי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ־לִי מַמְלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קָדוֹשׁ אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (שמות יט, ג-ו)

So should you say to Beis Yaakov and tell to Bnei Yisroel: You saw what I did to Mitzrayim, and I lifted you up on the wings of eagles and I brought you unto Me. And now if you shall listen to my voice and observe My covenant, you will be to Me the most beloved treasure from all the nations, for Mine is the entire world. You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you shall speak to the Bnei Yisroel.

Rashi explains that Hashem was particular that Moshe deliver "אלה הדברים", these specific words – "no more and no less". The Rosh Yeshiva Rav Weinberg zt"l pointed out that there is absolutely no mention of the Torah anywhere in the message. All it says is that you [Bnei Yisroel] know and saw that I, Hashem, took you out of Mitzrayim and now I'm offering you to accept My *bris* and if you do – I will make you "ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש".

How is this an offer to receive the Torah? The Rosh Yeshiva would always say that the Ribono Shel Olam was offering Klal Yisroel much more than *mitzvos* and Torah observance. He was offering them a relationship. He was offering an opportunity to reciprocate [as if that were possible] within the relationship He initiated. Rashi comments that Hakadosh Boruch Hu told them that He had a long laundry list of reasons to strike down Mitzrayim, but He did not start until they provoked Klal Yisroel. This demonstrates that Hakadosh Boruch Hu wanted to show Klal Yisroel that He was initiating and investing in a relationship with them, without looking for anything in return. He protected and took care of Klal Yisroel before they were aware of it.

Now, by offering Klal Yisroel the Torah, the Ribono Shel Olam was presenting them with the opportunity to "give back" and return something in the relationship. Becoming partners in a *bris* with the Ribono Shel Olam is the highest level of connection Klal Yisroel could obtain. Obviously, when we do *mitzvos* and Hashem's Will we do it for our own benefit, but the Ribono Shel Olam said that He will consider it to be a reciprocal relationship for us to give to Him by accepting and keeping the Torah.

The *meforshim* compare this to a blind man being guided by someone else. When they entered the house, the guide asked the blind man to turn on the light for him so he could see. The blind man asked, "why do you need me to turn on the light? I'm the blind one and you were leading me this whole time!" His friend replied, "That is true, but here we are both equal. In the dark, I am just as blind as you and now you have the opportunity to help me just like I helped you. I want you to return

the favor because I don't want to be in the situation where you are completely beholden to me. I want the relationship to be reciprocal because that is the closest, highest relationship we can have."

The loftiest relationship is when both sides are equally beholden and mutually giving to one another, and that is what the Ribono Shel Olam offered us when He sent this message through Moshe Rabbeinu. This is why He left out anything about any of the *mitzvos* or content of the Torah. The more important point is what was underlying giving Klal Yisroel the Torah and what it meant – the relationship forged and reciprocated.

Another theme in this *parashah* is the exchange between the Ribono Shel Olam and Moshe. Hashem told Moshe to tell Klal Yisroel that He would tell Moshe the entire Torah while they would stand present and overhear Him giving the Torah. But then the *posuk* says, "ויגד משה את דברי העם אל ה". What 'words from the people' did Moshe need to tell Hashem? They weren't being asked anything, they were being informed of what the Ribono Shel Olam was going to do and what their own part was to be – to stand by and overhear it.

Rashi explains that Moshe told Hashem how Klal Yisroel responded when they heard the plan. They insisted on receiving the Torah through direct communication from Hashem. There is no comparison between receiving a message from the king himself as opposed to hearing it from a messenger. Klal Yisroel said, "רצוננו לראות את מלכנו".

The first question is: what gave Klal Yisroel the standing to dictate their preference? The Ribono Shel Olam just told them what they are going to have. Apparently, Klal Yisroel felt that they had the right to make this request and insist on receiving the Torah directly from Him. They were pushing for a greater connection than what the Ribono Shel Olam was offering. Not only did they have a right to make the request, but they were vindicated, because the Ribono Shel Olam acquiesced, as the *pesukim* continue with His instructions for how they must prepare for it.

We see that Klal Yisroel has a right to ask for a greater and more intimate connection to the Ribono Shel Olam. So long as it's coming from the right place. If it is sincere, then the Ribono Shel Olam gives us the ability to push for a greater connection than what is in front of us.

He allows this even when we won't be able to handle that greater, closer connection. Hakadosh Boruch Hu knew the whole time that Klal Yisroel would not be able to survive this closer proximity, and they indeed died after first Commandment, and then again after the second. He revived them both times because they persisted in seeking an elevated interaction and connection with Him. The Ribono Shel Olam knew the whole time that this was suicidal on Klal Yisroel's part, and still He did not stop it and in fact He made open miracles to facilitate it and satisfy their desire for the closer connection.

We need to understand that we have the right and the opportunity to ask the Ribono Shel Olam for a greater connection than what He offers us. But it has to be coming from the right place. It has to be from a sincere, honest desire to become as close to the Ribono Shel Olam as humanly possible – *l'shem Shomayim*. It cannot be for *kavod*, *gaavo*, or any other selfish reason.

May the Ribono Shel Olam help us all so that we can come to that level – to be able to want to have the greatest bond and relationship to Him possible. In this way, we will become totally dedicated and devoted to the Ribono Shel Olam and bring *nachas ruach* to Him.